

THE
SOCIAL HISTORY
OF
KAMARUPA

Vol I

BY

NAGENDRA NATH VASU

PRACHYAVIDYAMAHARNAVA, SIDDHANTA-VARIDDI,

TATTVACHINTAMANI, &c. &c.

Compiler of Bengali Viconksha and Hind. Viconksha (Encyclopaedia

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Buddhism in Orissa, late Editor of the

Sahitya Parishad Patrika.

Editor, Raghuatpadrauna

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Indian Music)

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SOCIAL HISTORY OF KAMRUPA
Vol I

By

NAGENDRANATH VASU

DEDICATED

TO

RAJA PRABHAT CHANDRA BARUA BAHADUR

of Gauripur (Assam)

WHOSE HIGH CULTURE AND

NOBLE CHARACTER ARE

the pride of all those

WHO INTIMATELY KNOW HIM.

WITH THE GRATEFUL ESTEEM OF

THE AUTHOR

954-11

Vas

INTRODUCTION

It was in December, 1913, that I paid my visit for the first time to the historic and picturesque districts of Assam. I visited there the celebrated shrine of Kāmākhyā and the ancient places of Gauhati and Tezpur. Standing on the ruins of an ancient civilization and in the midst of a wild scenery which strikes the imagination by its beauty and grandeur I felt almost a fascination for the place. The historical materials which lay strewn all over the old Prāgyotishapur and other places not yet explored by scholars threw new lights on many obscure points of the past history and I felt a strong desire to undertake the compilation of a history of Assam on a somewhat elaborate scale. Assam seemed to me to have been once the meeting place of the various forces of ancient civilization. I found in the country typical old Aryans, still performing the Vedic rites, having lost all traditions of their ancestry, with sacred threads made of deerskin and reciting *mantras* which bear a strange resemblance to the ancient *ṛiks*. No one has, however, yet tried to interpret their sacred language and prove its affinity with that of the Rigveda and the Avesta, which it unmistakably bears. I found also in the country descendants of Vedic Panis, on whom showers of abuses have been poured by the Vedic Brāhmanas, driven in a remote primitive age from the land of the Five waters to these backwoods of Eastern India. Evidences of the ancient sea-trade of the Panis who had preceded the Aryans as settlers in India were also found abundant in the country. This wealth of material stirred up my imagination and I proceeded at once to make a thorough search in the domain of historical studies on both sides of the holy stream of the Brahmaputra. The Kāmṛup Research Society, Mahāmahopādhyāya Padma Nāth Vidyāvinoda, Mr. Hem Chandra Goswāmī, Rājā Prabhat Chandra Baruā Bāhādur of Gauṛipur and other gentlemen offered to render me every possible help, as soon as they were apprised of my intention.

In the winter of the next year I paid my second visit to Assam with my friend Mr. Dāmodar Datta Chowdhury, the famous artist and photographer. We travelled in various parts of the country, examining the materials found in Kāmākhyā, Gauhati and its suburbs and a good many ancient villages with their ruins from Gauhati to Tezpur. Lt.-Col. P. R. Gurdon, the then Commissioner of Assam and Surma Valley, Mr. Laine, the Deputy Commissioner of Dhubri, Mr. J. N. Gupta, Magistrate of Rungpur (now Commissioner) gave me facilities for studying the old records preserved in Government offices, which are inaccessible to the public and I am deeply indebted to these scholarly gentlemen for granting me their special permission. Col. Gurdon was kind enough to permit me to inspect the whole shelves of old Mss collected by the Government of Assam and preserved in the Commissioner's office and similar facilities were granted to me by Cooch Behar State, where I found abundant records which have been very useful to me. Col. Gurdon's earnest support in this matter of research cannot be overestimated. The Government of Assam bore all the expenses of my journey to Tezpur for seeing and deciphering the rock-inscription there. The original facsimiles of this are published in this volume for the first time though their reading was published sometime ago in the Behar and Orissa Research Society's Journal.

The first volume of this book contains a brief history of Kāmarūpa in the prehistoric age as well as of the period from the third to the fourteenth century of the Christian era. I have endeavoured to show from many ancient books to what height Kāmarūpa had risen in point of civilisation and prosperity long before the age of the Mahābhārata. I have already stated that the Panis or the Phœnicians described in the Vedas as an ancient race of traders whom the Vedic Aryans hated to a degree as they regarded them as their rivals, settled themselves on the eastern borders of India after they had been expelled from the western parts of the country by their more powerful opponents the Aryans. It will be seen in this volume how from the Lohita Sāgara (Red Sea) they sailed on board their

sea-going vessels and crossing the boisterous waves of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf founded a kingdom on the shores of Asia Minor which was called Phœnicia after their name. It is no mean glory to India that the race of mankind that civilized the eastern portions of Europe by dint of their commercial enterprise and their education had carried their civilization from Prāgyotisha or modern Kāmarūpa described in the Rāmāyana as washed by the waters of the Lohita Sāgara. Though all traces of the existence of the Phœnicians who were the originators of European civilisation have been bottled out from the Western World, yet their descendants may still be seen in various parts of Assam. They have been brought to such a low stage in consequence of repeated foreign attacks that seeing them one can scarcely imagine that at one time their ancestors had risen to the pinnacle of civilisation. Here we have a glowing example of how a highly cultured society sinks down to the bottom of degradation through vicissitudes of fortune.

The Chinese traveller Yuan Chuang visited Kāmarūpa in the 7th century A.D. In his description of the place he has described Bhāskara Varmā the king of Prāgyotisha as a Brāhmaṇa. Modern antiquarians hold that Yuan Chuang was wrong on this point. As Bhāskara Varmā had the surname of "Varmā" they are not disposed to call him a Brāhmaṇa. But from an examination of the manners and customs of the Assyrians it is known that their chiefs had to do the functions belonging to the sovereign as well as the high-priest. The king Bhagadatta who was the ancestor of Bhāskara Varmā has been described in the ancient books as a Mlechchha king belonging to the Asura tribe (Assur=Assyrian). It has also been proved that these Mlechchha chiefs were the political heads as well as high-priests of the community. Hence the statement of the Chinese pilgrim describing the line of Bhagadatta as belonging to the class of Brāhmaṇas cannot be regarded as erroneous. It is strange that the ancestors of Bhagadatta were not natives of India like the Pani-Kavachas or Panikoch. They had come from beyond the Himalayas and settled in Kāmarūpa

with the object of propagating their religion. Though this line still retains the political power yet on account of the spread of Brahmanic influence in the country it was deprived of the sacerdotal character in the 16th century of the Christian Era. Now it is not possible to find even a trace of it. How the Mlechchha dynasty lost its spiritual rights and how the ancient Mlechchha samāja of Kāmarūpa sank into the depth of degradation has been elaborately described in the second volume of this book.

It is recorded in the copper-plate inscription of Bhāskara Varmā that Pushya Varmā was eleventh in ascent from him in the line of ancestors. This Pushya Varmā flourished after three thousand years of the time of Bhagadatta. Therefore it must be admitted that the Assyrian influence commenced in Kāmarūpa more than 4,500 years before the present time. It has also been described in the first volume of this book how on account of the ascendancy of the Mlechchhas the power and influence of the Vedic Aryans who had vanquished the Pani-Kavachas came to an end and how they were reduced to a low stage in consequence of the persecution of the Mlechchha rulers and under the influence of their manners and customs. The Mlechchha rule lasted in this country from the time of Bhagadatta up to the 11th century A.D.

From the 9th century to the end of the 11th century Kāmarūpa was invaded by the Sûra and Pāla kings of Gauda and the Chālukyas, Chedis, Rāshtrakûtas, Yādavas and Karnātakas all of whom had led successful expeditions into kingdom of Gauda. As a result of these invasions the ancient Mlechchha line of Kāmarūpa was awfully weakened and was shorn of its former glory. Towards the end of the 11th century, Prāgyotisha was invaded by the army of Gauda and the Mlechchha king of the place was compelled to cede to the conquerors Kāmarūpa and Kāmtā.

It had been recorded at page 175 of this book in connection with the description of the influence of the Vedic Brāhmanas that only the Yajurvedi Brāhmanas (belonging to the *gotras* of Sāndilya, Kāpila, Bharadvāja, Parāsara, Kasyapa and

Suramaudgalya) were able to establish their influence in Kāmarūpa during the rule of Bhagadatta's line. But recently the lost portion of the copper-plate grant of Bhāskaravarmā which was so long unavailable to historians has been discovered. From it we learn that Rigvedi, Sāmavedi and Yajurvedi Brāhmanas lived in Kāmarūpa before the time of Bhāskaravarmā. Of these three classes of Brāhmanas the followers of the Bahvrchya branch of the Rigveda were divided into the *gotras* of Kāsyapa, Kausika, Gautama, Pārāsarya, Bharadvāja, Varāha, Vātsya, Vārhaspatya and Saunaka; those following the Chhandoga branch of the Sāmaveda belonged to the *gotras* of Pāskalya; the followers of the Taittiriya branch of the Yajurveda belonged to the *gotra* of Kāsyapa and those of the Charaka branch to the *gotra* of Kātyāyana; the followers of the Vājasaneyana branch belonged to the *gotras* of Aṅgīrasa, Alambāyana, Gārgya, Gautama, Bharadvāja, Yaska, Śakatāyana, and Śālankāyana besides the six *gotras* mentioned before.

In all these three groups of Brāhmanas living in Kāmarūpa had 26 *gotras*.* But in after ages no traces could be found of the Sāmavedi and Rigvedi Brāhmanas. Most probably they had changed their residence or their lines came to an end. The following lines occur in Rājā Harendra Nārāyan's Rājavanśāvali—

"The Brāhmanas living on the northern bank of the Lauhitya were all followers of the Yajurveda. They were all *sadāchāris* and *ritvijās* (Vedic sacrificers). They would lose their caste towards the middle of the Kaliyuga and then all would be brought to the same level. The Mlechchhas living in the east will destroy the caste of the Brāhmanas living in the south of the river Lauhitya."†

The first volume deals with the spread of the Kāyastha

* Mahāmahopādhyāya Padmanath Bhattacharyya on the last but one plate of Bāskaravarmā *Vide* Navayuga (Silchar) 1328 B.S. p. 47-49..

† "बौद्धिन् उत्तरकुले वैसी यत द्विज ।

सवे यजुर्वेदी सदाचारी ये क्षत्रिज ।

कश्चिन् मध्यत कुल नष्ट दा सम्भार ।

द्विवेक पादय सव लोक एकाकार ॥ २०८ ॥

rule in this place after the extinction of the Mlechchha rule. Though during the Kāyastha rule the manners and customs of Gauda and the influence of the Gaudiya Brāhmanas were introduced into Kāmarūpa, yet the Mlechchha manners and customs and ancient social ideas were not altogether banished from the place. The Kāyastha rule lasted here for about 200 years. Then a Kshatriya line known as the Bhāskara Dynasty became powerful in Assam. Though various traditions are current in Kāmarūpa and Upper Assam about this line of kings and though many books of modern times profess to contain much information about it, yet really its true history is to some extent shrouded in mystery. The history of the Bhāskara Dynasty has been narrated in the copper-plate inscription of Vallabhadeva of this line. According to tradition "Jongal Balahu" or Vallabha the intelligent was defeated by the Chutiyas and drowned himself in the Kallang river. After this, his descendants lost much of the glory of their ancestors and somehow managed to retain the kingship of the land in their hands.

Most probably their Kāyastha ministers spread their rule after this time. These were the Adi or original Bhūiyās. They had no connection with the Bāro-Bhūiyās who came after them. The power of the Adi Bhūiyās came to an end on account of the rise of the kings of the Ahom line on the eastern border of Assam. An account of the Adi Bhūiyās has been given in the first volume.

The social history of Kāmarūpa in the later times forms the subject matter of the second volume. In this book it has been described how the Bāro-Bhūiyās rose to eminence in central and western Kāmarūpa on the fall of the Bhāskara Dynasty, how as a result of their rule the influence of the Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas spread in several parts of the country, how their power came to an end on account of their internal strifes, how the ancient Mlechcha (Mecha) line again rose to power in

लौहित्य दक्षिणकुले विप्र समक्षर ।

खेच्छे नाशिवन्ना जाति पुत्रे ये दिश्र ॥

(Vide Assam Govt. Collection, Darrang No. 2. Part I, leaf 13, front)

Kāmarúpa and Kāmtā, how the descendants of the Bāro-Bhūiyās though deprived of all political power rose high in the domain of religion, how the establishment of Vaishnavism in Assam in consequence of the spread of the doctrine of Bhakti by the Mahāpurushīya and Dāmodarīya sects ushered in a new era in the religious history of the country, how the Mecha kings came to be deprived of their sacerdotal function from the time of the king Naranārāyana though they had been enjoying it from the time immemorial, how respectable and learned Brāhmanas were taken from Gauda and Mithilā for the introduction of the manners and customs of the ideal Hindus living in Aryāvarta, how the manners and customs of Mithilā came to be introduced in Kāmarúpa and Kāmtā, how the Bāro-Bhūiyās coming from Gauda and the higher-class Kāyasthas coming from Mithilā proceeded with the work of social reform under the leadership of Kavindra Pātra the prime-minister of the king Naranārāyana in order to preserve the individuality of their own *saṁāja* themselves remaining aloof from the other Kāyastha *saṁājas*, how the Kavindra Pātra's ancestor is migrated from southern Rādha on the Ganges to Mithilā where they held the post of the prime-minister from generation to generation, how their descendants settled in Kāmarúpa, how the peculiar family customs introduced by them are still being followed by the Maithil Kāyasthas, what effort Kavindra Pātra had made for the introduction of these customs in Kāmarúpa and Kāmtā, and how his descendants the Rājās of Gauripur took the lead in the Kāyastha *Samāja* of Assam and were from time to time given sanads, grants and were also appointed to high posts by the Mughal Emperors as well as the independent rulers of the locality. These ancient sanads may still be seen in the palace at Gauripur. The sanads and other contemporary writings have furnished materials for the account of the historic family of Gauripur given in the second volume of this work.

the establishment of matrimonial connexion with them. In the second volume I have also discussed how latterly the Ahom kings brought Śākta Brāhmanas from Bengal and how through the influence of them Śāktaism again prevailed in Kāmarūpa.

It was my desire to bring out both the volumes together, but in view of the present condition of my health, I am compelled to put off the publication of the second volume for the present. As ill-luck would have it, I feel seriously ill after taking charge of this heavy task. So this work had to be stopped for some days. The printing work of this book commenced about six years before this date. But no satisfactory progress could be made in the work on account of my illness and the mismanagement of the press. After half of this book had been printed I fell ill of chronic Nephritis and heart-disease. So under medical advice I had to abstain from all sorts of brain-work for some time. The condition of my health had become so bad that there was very little likelihood of its being completed by myself. However, through the grace of the Almighty, I have now got a little strength after having suffered from illness for more than a year during the whole of which period I had to take complete rest. Now I am in a position to proceed with the work in hand with the help of the assistants. In this way the first volume of the "SOCIAL HISTORY OF KAMARUPA" is published in the midst of illness, inconvenience and obstacles of all kinds.

Here I most gratefully acknowledge the assistance I have received in the preparation of this work from my friends and well-wishers of whom the names of Rājā Prabhāt Chandra Baruā Bahādur of Gauripur, Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād Sāstrī, M.A., C.I.E., Rāi Bahādur Dīnesh Chandra Sen, D.Litt., Mahāmahopādhyāya Padmanāth Bhattāchāryya Vidyāvinoda, and Babu Syāmāpada Chatterjee, M.A. may be specially mentioned.

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NAGENDRANATH VASU.

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Harjara Varmā (with transcript) (facing p. 159.)

CORRECTIONS

Page 43, lines 18 and 38—read "Kumārikā-khaṇḍa"
for "Revākhaṇḍa."

THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF KAMARUPA

CHAPTER I

The Pre-historic Period

1. General remarks

The aim of the present book is to set forth before the reader as faithful a picture as possible of that glorious land of hallowed memory, known as Kāmarûpa, with an account of its people, their social life and the history of their civilisation. Bounded on the north by the Himalayas, and on the south by Mandāchala generally known as the Garo Hills, and protected in the East and West by the Dikkara-vāsini and the sacred Karatoyā respectively, this beautiful strip of land seems situated, as it were, in the very lap of Nature, well secured against all outside influence. Naturally, therefore, curiosity is vigorously excited to enquire and learn how the first torch of civilisation was carried here into this easternmost part of India, cut off from the rest of the world by natural barriers, spread with a splendid net-work of sparkling mountain-streams, and possessing a wild grandeur of its own with hills and dales, woods and

Kāmarupa's
claims to
historical
recognition.

wildernesses. In the midst of its varied charms, while the foreigner is lost to himself, he cannot help feeling deeply surprised as to how such an insulated scene could come to be the first meeting place of East and West, North, and South—become a stage for so many different races, Aryans and non-Aryans, playing their different parts upon.

These are questions that profoundly interest not only the historian or archæologist, but all those who would study nationalism and try to understand the very interesting history of the rise and fall of a nation, and who are eager to know how the Aryans, the Dravidians and the Mongolians came to be blended together into one people and would also like to have a peep into their social life.

I am afraid, no right solution of these problems will ever be arrived at, until the student has paid due attention to this land of antiquarian surprises, which is unlike any other part of India, being, as it is, the home of many colours and races. I do not remember to have ever been to a place which can lay greater claims to being looked upon as a federation-hall where the most ancient and the most modern, the most antiquated and the most up-to-date, are found to meet together upon terms of perfect cordiality. The followers of all the schools of philosophy, the Vedic, the Paurāṇic and the Tāntric, have thrived here equally well ; and people of all races, Aryans and non-Aryans, Hindus and non-Hindus, have equally contributed to the building up of the social fabric of Kāmarūpa. In a word, with the ancient history of this glorious land is indissolubly bound up the social, religious and national history of the whole of India, more

The federation-hall of East & West, the old and the new.

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especially of Eastern India. Hence it is that no study of the history of India can ever be complete without a peep into the social life of this part of the country.

2. The Phoenicians in Eastern India.

The Vedas contain the earliest written record of the Aryan world. Let us therefore in the first place turn to them to see if there is no special mention in them of this particular part of the country.

First of all we come across the following account in the Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa—

The Vedic references.

“Māthava¹ the Videgha was at that time on the river Sarasvatī. (The Rishi Gotama Rāhūgana was his family-priest.) He (Agni) thence went burning along this earth towards the east; and Gotama Rāhūgana and Videgha Māthava followed him as he was burning along. He burnt over (dried up) all these rivers. Now that (river) which is called Sādānirā flows from the northern (Himālaya) mountain: that one he did not “burn over”. That one the Brāhmans did not cross in former times, thinking ‘it has not been burnt over by Agni-Vaisvānara’. Now-a-days, however, there are many Brāhmans to the east of it. At that time the land to the east of the Sādānirā was very uncultivable

1. The reading ‘Videgha Māthava’ has been accepted in the printed edition of the Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa. In all other places however ‘Videha’ is the reading (I. 4.1. 17; XIV. 6. 11. 6, 7.2. 39) while the commentator Śāyana has accepted the reading of Mādhava, explaining it as the son of Madhu.

and very marshy, because it had not been tasted by Agni-Vaisvānara. Now-a-days, however, it is highly cultivated, for through sacrifices the Brāhmanas have caused (Agni) to taste it. Even in late summer that (river) rages along; so cold is it, not having been burnt over by Agni-Vaisvānara. Māthava the Videgha then said to Agni, 'Where am I to abide?' 'To the east of this river be thy abode' said he. Even now this river forms the boundary of the Kosalas and Videhas; for these are the Māthavas"².

In the Sāyana-bhāṣhya of the Satapatha-Brāhmana and Amarakosha as well as in the Paundra portion of the Skanda-Purāṇa, Karatoyā is found to have been accepted as a second name for the Sadānirā. Needless to say that it is this Karatoyā which makes up the western boundary of Kāmarūpa, the subject-matter of our present research. It has also to be noted that western scholars have accepted the above quotation from the Satapatha-Brāhmana as an account of the spread of Aryan civilisation in Eastern India. While from the Rigveda we come to learn that at first the Aryans marked out the banks of the Sarayu or the territory of Kosala as the Eastern boundary of Āryāvarta,³ home of the Vedic Aryans. The Satapatha-Brāhmana, quoted above, proves however that the tract of land extending from Kosala to the Sadānirā or Karatoyā had already come to be recognised as the 'land of sacrifices' and

Videgha Māthava spreading Aryan culture in Eastern India.

2. Satapatha-Brāhmana, I, 4, 1, 14-17. Vide Eggeling's Translation, p. 105-106.

3. Vide Rigveda IV. 30. 18; V. 22. 9; X. 64. 9 and the Hindi Visvakosha (Encyclopædia Indica), Vol. 11. p. 699.

therefore included in the "home of the Aryans." We do even find that many Brāhmanas had settled in the country to the East of the Karatoyā. "Many of them (Brāhmanas) are however now found to live on the eastern banks of the Sadānirā"—⁴ this line from the Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa quoted above, proves conclusively that in carrying the torch of Aryan civilisation east-wards, king Videgha Māthava and his priest Gotama Rāhūgana were (preceded and) accompanied by a large number of Brāhmanas, who settled in the country. Rāhūgana Gotama was no ordinary man ; he was the Rishi (Seer) who had published the Sūktas 74-93 of the first Maṇḍala of the Rigveda. It was he whose priestly services were requisitioned in the performance of sacrifices by Videgha Māthava when he was engaged in spreading Vedic influence and culture over Eastern India.

It will be no presumption to say that Videgha Māthava, in his endeavours to spread Vedic culture, must have been stubbornly opposed by the princes of these Eastern territories, who were non-Vedic in thought, spirit and action. Their homes were invaded ; whatever they held sacred and dear was being replaced by Vedic ideals, and naturally they must have resisted to the best of their powers. However, they had

Opposition
offered by
non-Vedic
princes of
the East.

4 "तत एतद्भिः प्राचीनं बहवो ब्राह्मणास्तत्रा चोत्तरनिवासः ।"

(Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa, I. 4. 1. 15.)

In his Bhāṣyas of the above passage, Sāyana thus comments—

'ततः तस्या नद्याः प्राचीनं प्राग्देशं एतद्भिः इदानीं बहवो ब्राह्मणाः निवसन्ति, प्राग्देशः सर्व्वेऽपि ब्राह्मणवासः इत्यर्थः । तच्च स्थानमचोत्तरनिवास इति शब्देन निवासयोग्यमित्यत्र आस वक्ष्यते ।'

to give way before the advancing tide of Vedic civilisation.

The Panis—
what are
they?

Now, occidental scholars are found disposed to regard these princes of Eastern India as aborigines. We find mention made of a particular race, known as Pani, in the hymns of the Rigveda ascribed to Rāhûgana Gotama. We learn from these that of all races the Panis offered the most stubborn resistance to the tide of Vedic civilisation led by the sage Gotama Rāhûgana and Videgha Māthava.

A powerful
race of tra-
ders.—Not
savages or
Asuras.

It may not therefore be deemed out of place to turn to the Vedas to see if there be not any reference in them to these heroic Panis. From a study of the earliest texts of the Vedas we come to know that in that dim past, about 6000 years back, when sacrifice-loving Aryans had not yet succeeded in establishing their culture over Eastern India, nay even before the caste system had been introduced, a powerful race of traders known as Panis had made themselves master of Northern India from the banks of the Sarasvati to Kāmarûpa. In his commentary of the Rigveda, Sāyanāchārya is found to have spoken of these Panis as Asuras.⁵ In the earlier portions of the Vedas, however, they had never been referred to as such, and neither their characteristics nor their manners and customs had ever betrayed them as Asuras. Rather, showing these two classes to be different from

5. Following Sāyana, Mahidhara also had said in his commentary of Vājasaneyā-Samhitā (xxv. 1.)

‘पणन्ति परद्वैर्वर्षवह्नन्तीति पणयोऽसुराः’ i.e. the Panis are a class of Asuras who deal in others' goods.

one another, the words *Pani* and *Asura* appear in one and the same hymn of the *Atharva-Samhitā*.⁶ In the *Rik-Samhitā*, the earliest literary work extant in the world, mention is made, in speaking of the rise of the Vedic Aryans, of two hostile camps—in the one being the *Devas* and the *Asuras* who were given to sacrifice, and in the other being the *Panis* and the *Dasyus* or *Dāsas* who were opposed to sacrifices. Although, as the above line will show, the *Devas* and the *Asuras* were spoken of in the earlier portions of the *Rigveda* as belonging to the same race and society, in the later portions these have been described as two hostile and different nations.⁷ And, in course of time, their hostilities reached such a height and made them so characteristically opposed to each

6. “येन ऋषयो बलमयीतयन् युजा येनासुराणामयुवन् मायाः ।

तेनाग्निना पथीनिहो जिगाय स नो सुखलं हसः ॥”

(*Atharva-samhitā*, IV. 23. 5.)

‘With whom as ally the seers made [their] strength shine out, with whom they repelled the wiles of the *Asuras*; with whom Agni and Indra conquered the *Panis*—let him free us from distress.’ (W. D. Whitney’s translation, p. 191)

In *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* (v. 24. 30) also the *Panis* have been separated from the *Asuras* and spoken of as *Nivāta-kavachas* or *Kālākeyas*, the dwellers of *Hiranyapura* in the nethermost region.

7. In the earlier portions of the *Rigveda* even *Indra* and the other gods are found to have passed as *Asuras*; thus *Devas* and *Asuras* made up but one community. Probably this relates to very ancient times. In later days, however, domestic dissensions alienated the two parties and they came to be recognised as two different hostile classes. Thus in the *Brāhmanas*, the *Dharma-sāstras* and the *Purāṇas*, *Devas* have been represented as irreconcilable enemies of *Asuras*, while in the *Avesta*, the book of *Ahura* or *Asura*, these are spoken of as enemies of the *Daēvas* or *Devas*.

The Pani's
life.

other that, whether belonging to the Asura community or not, any one who was opposed to the Devas was set down as an Asura. It is very likely that in the eyes of Sāyana and Mahādhara, the commentator of the White Yajurveda, the Panis thus came to be regarded as Asuras. Indeed a study of even the hymns of the Rigveda composed under inspiration by the Rishis (or Seers) who were deadly enemies of the Panis would leave no room for doubt that the latter were a powerful, prosperous and civilised race. They were engaged in trade and commerce, expert in making money, and given to usury ; and they dealt principally in milk, ghee and curd, and their chief wealth was cattle. And they were known to the primitive Aryans as being mortal enemies of those who would perform sacrifices with meat and the juice of the *Soma* plant. Now, it was the cattle which formed the chief wealth of the Vedic Aryans. In the Virāṭa-Parva of the Mahābhārata is described a furious battle that took place between the Kauravas and the followers of Virāṭa, because the former had stolen sixty thousand of his cattle.⁸ This gives us an idea of how highly the cattle were prized. No wonder therefore that just for the same reason many a deadly battle was fought between the Panis who needed cattle for purposes of trade and cultivation and the Aryans who also needed them for purposes of sacrifices. These battles were not always decided in favour of one party, the Panis winning victory almost as many times as the Vedic Aryans, thus showing that in point of

8. Mahābhārata-Virāṭa parva, ch. 33 ff.

prowess at least they were not much inferior. Indeed in many places of the Rigveda, Vedic Rishis are found to indulge in weak lamentations for fear of molestation by the Panis who were opposed to all sacrificial rites. This is clearly borne out by the following line from the very first hymn that has to be offered according to the Yajurveda in performing the Pitṛmedha-yāga (for propitiating the manes of departed ancestors)—

“Be off the disagreeable Panis who are enemies of the gods.”⁹

Does not this line incline one to entertain a shrewd suspicion that the primitive Rishis, or at least the ancestors of those who were the first to introduce the Pitṛmedha sacrifice were either molested and killed by the Panis or were at least terribly afraid of them ; or why should the sacrifice (to be performed after collecting the sacred bones of deceased ancestors), be introduced with an invocation like this against the Panis ? Let us now see how the sacrificers and the Panis came to be so inimically disposed to each other.

According to some scholars who have made a special study of the Vedas, when Aryan civilisation under its Rishis was spreading eastward from the Punjab, the flourishing localities of India were under the sway of the Pani-chiefs, while the woods and hilly tracts were under the non-Aryan Dāsas or Dasyus. Accordingly most of the cattle were in the possession of the Panis ; while the Rishis also stood in very

The causes of difference between the Panis and the Aryans.

9 “अपेक्षो यं तु पण्योऽसुखा देवपीयवः ।”

(Vājasaneyā-saṃhitā 35. 1.)

great need of them as their sacrifices could not be performed without milk, ghee and curd. We get the following in the hymns of the Rigveda :—

“The Panis had kept concealed in the cow three different nutritious substances, viz, milk, ghee and curd. The Devas obtained them. Indra got one, Sūrya another and the other gods the third one, from the luminary (fire or air)”¹⁰

Does not this quotation from the Vedas go clearly to prove that the Aryan sacrificers did not at first know how to get milk, ghee and curd, and must have learnt their use from the Panis ? Hence the cow came to be a very valuable thing with them, after their intercourse with the latter. The cow was also valuable in another way. Veal was an indispensable item of hospitality in those days.

But it was the Panis chiefly to whom the cow belonged. And the Aryan sacrificer also stood sorely in need of the animal. Hence regular and systematic attempts had to be made by the ancient Aryans to steal away the cattle of the Panis. Thus a deadly hostility sprang up between the two, the sacrificers stealing away the cows whenever they could, and the Panis recovering them heroically. It was most convenient to take away the cattle at dead of night when the owners would be dead asleep : and it was probably for this reason that the Vedic Rishis are found again and again to have called on Indra and the other gods to keep the

10. “विषा हितं पशिमिषु ह्यमानं गवि देवासी घृतमन्वविन्दन् ।

इन्द्र एकं सूर्य एकं जज्ञान वनादिकं स्वधया निष्टतच्चः ॥”

(Rigv. IV. 58. 4.)

Panis either unconscious or locked in the embrace of sleep.¹¹

From a study of the Rigveda it appears that it was the Rishi Atharvan who was the first, to kindle this deadly feud with the Panis.¹² After him Ajāśya, the sons of Angiras, and the Navagus long carried on this strife. With a view to know where the cows were kept, they first secured the services of a woman named Saramā and sent her into the invulnerable strongholds of the Panis. She was beautiful and in the bloom of youth. The Panis welcomed her as though she were a sister to them. Saramā had come with a motive. First of all, she tried to threaten them into submission to Indra, lord of the Devas and described how powerful the latter was, hinting that the Panis would come to grief if they resisted his power. The Panis, however, were a brave people, paid no heed to her warning and said, "Dear lady, you can dismiss all such fears. Our wealth which consists of cows, horses and other valuable things, is hidden in mountain fastnesses and guarded by those of us who are most competent for it."¹³ This is only one instance of the many ways in which the sacrificers were ever attempting to rob the Panis of all their

The story of Saramā,—an instance of the tricks played by the Aryans against the Panis

11. "प्र बोधयोषः पृणतो सवोन्यबुध्यमानः पणथः संतु ।"

Rigveda I. 124. 10.

12. "यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्तते ततः सूर्यो व्रतपा वेन आजनि ।"

(Rigv. i. 83. 5.)

13. "अथ निधिः सरमे अद्रिवुधो गोमिरश्चे भिर्वसुमिन्मृष्टः ।

रक्षन्ति तं पणयो वे सुगोपा रेकु पदमलक्ष्मा नगंश्च ॥"

(Rigv. x. 108. 7.)

wealth. Of the Rishis who were most inimically disposed to the Panis, the following names are most prominent—Agastya (i. 182. 3; v. 184. 4), Anānata (ix. 111.2), Ayāsyā (x. 67.6), Asita Kāsyapa Devala (ix. 22. 7), Rijisvā (vi. 51. 14), Auchathya Dirghatamas (i. 151.9), Kaksivān (i. 124. 10), Dairghatamasa Ausija, Kalipragātha (viii. 66. 10), Grītsamada (ii. 24. 6), Gotama Rāhūgana (i. 83. 4, 93. 4), Trisoka Kanva (viii. 45. 14), Pragātha Kanva (viii. 64. 2), Bharadvāja Bārhaspatya (vi. 20. 4; 39. 2; 61. 1, 53, 3, 6), Rebha Kāsyapeya (viii. 97. 2), Vandhu (i. 94. 4; x. 60. 6), Vasishṭha (vii. 6. 3, 19. 9), Vāmadeva (iv. 25. 7; 51. 3 : 58. 4), Visvamanā Vaiyasva (viii. 26. 10), Visvāmitra (iii. 58. 2, 53. 14), Virūpa Āngirasa (viii. 75. 7), Saryāta Mānava (x. 92.3.), Sunahotra (vi. 33.2), Samvarana (v. 34. 7), Hiranyastūpa Āngirasa (i. 32. 11; 33. 3).

Princes,
Rishis and
even wives
of Rishis
joined hands
in suppress-
ing the Panis

It is these who are principally found to have piteously and earnestly invoked the vengeance of Agni, Indra, Soma, Mitrāvaruna and the twin Asvins upon the Panis for bringing about their total annihilation or severe downfall. Of the royal seers who took up arms against these enemies on behalf of the sacrificers, kings Asamāti (x. 60. 6.) and Dabhiti (ii. 15. 4, 9; vi. 20. 13) have been noticed in the Rigveda. Not only Rishis and princes, but also the wives of Rishis occasionally went out to fight the Panis in the hope of seizing their cattle. Among these amazons, Indra-senā, wife of seer Mudgala has been accorded a high place in the Rigveda.¹⁴

14. In Rigveda X. 102. 2, the following account is found of her—

Among the Pani-chiefs or leaders, the following names appear in the Rigveda—Vrisaya, Tugra, Susna, Pipru, Vetasu, Dasoni, Tutuji, Ibha, Sarat, Navavāstva, Dhuni, Chumuri, Pramaganda and Bribu. Of these Vrisaya lived on the banks of the Sarasvatī, Bribu of the Ganges and Pramaganda in Kikāṭa and ruled among themselves over the whole of Northern and Eastern India. A terrible battle is found to have been fought on the banks of the Sarasvatī between the Aryan sacrificers and the Panis, in which a large number of the latter were killed including the son of Vrisaya. Among the Pani-chiefs of later times, mention is made of a tributary prince who ruled in Sindhu-Sauvira¹⁵.

Pani-chiefs
of the Vedic
age—their
territories.

As noticed previously, the powerful Pani-chiefs, surrounded by soldiers and tributary princes, have been slightly spoken of only as cattle-drivers, usurers, and traders. To get out of milk, ghee and curd, they had particular implements called Chatus-srīṅga (four-horned) and 'Dasa-yantra-utsa'¹⁶. They undertook sea-voyages for purposes of trade and commerce,¹⁷ realised

The Panis
were a civilised
people.
Derivative
meaning of
Pani.

“उत्स वाताः वहति वासो अस्या अविश्यं यदजयत् सहस्रं ।

रथोरमुद्गुहलानौ गविष्टौ भरं कृतं वाचेदिन्द्रसिना ॥”

The wind fluttered (the end of) her cloth, she mounted on a chariot and defeated Sahasra. When the cows were taken, this wife of Mudgala got on a chariot. Her name was Indrasenā. She drove out the cows from the midst of enemy soldiers.

15. Bhāgavata-purāṇa, Shandha v, ch. 9.

16. “अथ गोषु शच्या पक्ष्मल सोमो दाधार दशयन्मसुत्सं ।”

(ऋक् ६।४४।२४)

17. “तं गूर्तयो नमन्निषः परीथसः समुद्रं न स चरणे सन्निष्वतः ।”

(ऋक् १।५६।२)—

higher prices for goods of lower value¹⁸ and lent money at high rates of interest.¹⁹ It is a matter of very great surprise that some famous western scholars could find no other epithet for such an advanced people than "a group of demons of the upper air".²⁰ According to Yāska, however, who wrote a Nirukta on the obscure and obsolete words appearing in the Vedas, *Pani* means *Vanik* or merchant²¹ : nowhere has he accepted it in the sense of Asura or demon. The famous Grammarian Pāṇini also has derived *Vanik* from the root *pana*.

As stated above, this collision between the Aryan sacrificers and the *Panis* took place before the regular caste-system had been established throughout India. This state of warfare continued long, as the result of which the *Panis* were gradually deprived of all their possessions and some left the mother-country by sea for distant regions, some went to the far-off east and

—“समो पणेरजति भोजनं सुषे वि दा शुषे भजति सूनरं वसु ।”

(ऋक् ५।३।७)

18. “भूयसा वस्त्रमचरत् कनीयोऽविक्रीतो अकानिषं पुनर्दन् ।

स भूयसा कनीयो नारीचेद्दीना दत्त्वा वि दुहन्ति प्र वाणम् ।”

(ऋक् ४।२४।६)

19. “इन्द्रो विश्वान्विक्रानाटो अहर्दश सप्त क्रत्वा पणो रमि ।”

(ऋक् ८।६६।१०)

20. Macdonell's Vedic Mythology (in Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie, Vol. III) p. 157.

21. In explaining “निरुद्धा आपः पणिनेव गावः” (ऋक् १।२३।३) and “सप्त क्रत्वा पणो रमि” (ऋक् ८।६६।१०) Yāska in his Nirukta has affirmed “पणिवर्णिग् भवति पणिः पणनाड्यणिक् पण्यं नेनेति ।” (२।५।३) तथा ‘पणो’श्च वणिजः’ (६।५।३) *Pani* and *Banik* mean just the same thing. From *Pani* comes *Panya* (merchandise) in which a *Banik* (Merchant) deals.

others settled in the Deccan. Those who lagged behind gradually lost their nationality and became merged in the community of the sacrificers.

In 108 Sūkta of the 10th māṇḍala of the Rīgveda where the incident between Saramā and the Panis is related the latter are called Rishis²² or Seers. The language used also is that of the Vedic Aryans. Hence it is clear that by this time among some of the Panis at least the language of the Vedic Aryans had become current. Again in one place in the Rīgveda (vii. 45. 14) even Indra has been called Pani,²³ showing clearly that the Panis could never be barbarians but were certainly a civilised people and some of them were influenced by Aryan ways of thought and worship. Just as there were Rishis, as noticed above, who condemned the Panis, there were also Rishis who sided with them, among whom Ketu, Āgneya (x. 156. 3), Samyu Bārhaspatya (vi. 44ff) and some others have been mentioned in the Rīgveda. Ketu Rishi invoked the blessings of Agni (fire-god) for promoting the commercial interests of the Panis²⁴. A Pani-chief of the name of Brihu not only em-

Panis spoken of as Rishis.

Aryan Rishi as champions of the Panis.

22. “प्रथमादित्यया अयुजोऽन्नावर्जिताः पथीनां वाक्वाणि । अथ त एव ऋषयः । सरसा देवता ।” (सायणभाष्य)

23. “ककुहं चित्वा कवे मन्दं तु घृणविन्दवः ।

आ त्वा परिं यदीमहे ।” (ऋक् ८४५।१४)

24. “अग्ने स्थूरं रयिं भर वृधुं गोमलमश्विनं ।

अग्निं खं वत्तं या परिं ॥” (ऋक् १०।१५६।३)

“Grant, you Agni, vast wealth in the shape of a large number of cows and horses, wash the sky with rain-water and promote the commerce of the Panis.”

braced the sacrificer's creed but himself became a sacrificer. He has been praised even in the Rigveda. Samyu Bārhaspatya Rishi has sung,—

“Bribu occupied as high a place as the banks of the Ganges among the Panis. To a seeker after wealth like myself he has given away one thousand cows as quickly as the wind blows. Let us therefore sing the glories of that Bribu who is wise, gives away one thousand cows and is worthy of all praise.”²⁵

Even in Manu-Samhitā (x. 107) and also in Nitimanjarī Bribu's munificence has been noticed.

he Panis
are the
Phoenicians
of the Wes-
tern world.

It is these Panis of the Vedic age who have passed as Phoenicians in the Western civilised world and later as Banik in India. The ancient Greeks and Germans called them Fonik or Fenek and even Punic. Herodotus wrote in the 5th century B. C.—“The Foeniks are known to have been the first people to engage in trade and commerce. Formerly they lived on the shores of the Red Sea”.²⁶ Mr. Pococke in his ‘India in Greece’ (p. 218) clearly states that the Phoenicians originally dwelled in Afganistan.

In that *sūkta* of the Rigveda in which is related the affair between Saramā and the Panis quoted above, it is clearly stated that she had to cross the river Rasā to reach the quarters of the Panis, for she was asked by them

25. “अधि ब्रुवुः पणौनां वर्षिष्ठे सूर्ध्वन्नस्यात् । उरुः कचो न गाङ्गाः ।

यस्य वायोः रिक् द्रवद्गद्गा रातिः सहस्रिणी । सद्यो दानाय मंहते ।

तत्सु नो विश्वे अर्थ आ सदा गृणन्ति कारवः ।

ब्रुवुं सहस्रदातमं सूरिं सहस्रसातमं ।” (ऋक् ६।४५।३१-३३)

26. Herodotus, i. 1 ; vii. 89.

how she had crossed the river.²⁷ Passing through Khurāsān and Gandhāra (modern Afghanistan) this river flowed into the Indus.²⁸ We learn from the Rigveda that the Pamis had strongholds on the banks of this river; and on the same authority we have found that their sway extended over Eastern India also. We also find from the Book of Kings that the Phœnician chief Hiram, King of Tyre (970—936 B. C.) contributed cedar and fig trees as well as workmen and gold for Solomon's palace and temple. In return Hiram received the grant of a territory in Cabul. (1. Kings ix. 14.) These bear a clear testimony to their greatness.

On the authority of Herodotus, the Encyclopædia Britannica has given us the following account—

“The Phœnicians themselves retained some memory of having migrated from older seats on an eastern sea; Herodotus (i. 1, vii. 84) calls

27. “कथं रसाया चतरः पयांसि ॥” (१०।१०८।१)

“How have you crossed the waters of the Rasā?”

‘रसा नाम नदी चण्डवर्ध योजनविस्तारा’ (निरुक्तटीका—देवराज ११।३।४)

In his commentary on Niruktas Devarāja says, “The river named Rasā is wide over half a Yojana.”

28. In V. 53. 9 of the Rigveda the following five rivers are mentioned together—Rasā, Anitabhā, Kubhā, Kramu and Sindhu (Indus).

“मा वो रसानितभा कुमा क्रुमर्मा वः सिन्धुर्नि रोरमत ।”

(५।५३।९)

In the Avesta the Rasā is named Ranzhā. Kubhā, and Kramu are respectively the modern Kabul and Kuram rivers. All these flow through the frontiers of Afghanistan and the Punjab. The name of the Indus in the Punjab is well known. It is into this Indus that the Rasā was flowing.

it "the red sea" meaning probably the Persian Gulf; the tradition, therefore, seems to show that the Phœnicians believed that their ancestors came originally from Babylonia. By settling along the Syrian coast they developed a strangely un-Semitic love for the sea, and advanced on different lines from the other Canaanites, who occupied the interior. They called themselves Canaanites and their land Canaan; such is their name in the Amarna tablets, *Kinahhi* and *Kinahni* ... the Canaanite sailors were spoken of as the redmen on account of their sun-burnt skin."²⁹

The writer of the above article has come to the conclusion that the "red sea" bounding the original home of the Phœnicians is identical with the Persian Gulf. This, however, does not stand to reason. The Persian Gulf was not on the east of Babylon and nowhere in ancient records has the Persian Gulf been spoken of as the "red sea", by which name in olden times two seas were distinctly known, one being situated to the west of Arabia and the other to the east of India. Now, the Red Sea bounding Arabia in the west can never be the sea of that name mentioned by Herodotus, for it is not situated in the east, as stated by him, but in the west of Phœnicia. The "Eastern sea" to the east of Phœnicia, as mentioned by the Phœnicians is no other than the "Eastern sea" (*Pūrva-samudra*) mentioned in the *Manu-samhitā* as the eastern boundary of *Āryāvarta* or the Aryan land; and the "Red Sea" of Herodotus also is no other than the Red Sea (*Lohita-sāgara* , so called for its

Primitive
home of the
Phœnicians
—India.

The Red
Sea—Its
localisation.

blood-red waters), mentioned in the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. This points clearly to India as being the original home of the Phœnicians. The Pani's life described above also goes a long way to prove that the Panis and the Phœnicians were the same people, following the same calling; and there was a time when their authority was established over the whole of India. Evidently they were compelled by the Vedic Aryans of Western India gradually to migrate eastward till they settled on the other side of the Karatoyā on the shores of the Lohita-sāgara (Red Sea). We do definitely learn from the Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa that the influence of the Vedic Aryans could not easily establish itself here in the Vedic age, the eastern banks of the Sadānirā or Karatoyā having long remained inaccessible to them. At that time these regions were known to the Vedic Brāhmins as being mostly under water.

It is the
Pūrva Samu-
dra of the
Manu-Sam-
hitā, and
Lohita-
Sāgara of the
Rāmāyana
and the
Mahābhārata.

It will have been clear from what has been said above—and this will be further proved hereafter—that it was this land which was the centre of the Pani life; and it was from this home on the Eastern banks of the Karatoyā that the Panis or Phœnicians sailed out to far-off countries for purposes of trade and commerce. Geologists have established that there was a time when sea-waves swept over the land (forming the present Mymensing and Sylhet districts) lying to the south of the Garo, Khasia and Jaintia hills as well as to the west of Sylhet and the Cachar hills.³⁰ Now, therefore, this was the sea which the

The Red
Sea.

30. Even in our own times some parts of the Mymensing and Dacca Districts are still marked as "Sea". Here is an extract from the Railway Survey Report—

Phœnicians called "Eastern Sea" and which was also the Pūrva-Samudra (Eastern Sea) of the Manu-Samhitā, bounding Āryāvarta in the east. In those days the Sadānirā or Karatoyā and the Lauhitya (modern Brahmaputra) probably flowed into this part of the Sea, which in the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata³¹ has been called the Lohita-sāgara (Red Sea). In describing the Eastern quarter the Rāmāyana has the following :—The terrible Lohita-sāgara is full of red waters ; not far from it is the home of Garuḍa, king of birds, upon a mountain-top, on the summit of which dwells a class of monsters called Mandeha.³²

"Upon the east the area is bounded by a low-lying country which for six or more months of the year, is under water and where communication by boats of monndage varying with the stream and season is always possible. This country is frequently spoken of as the "Sea." The coast line of this sea may be taken as a line drawn through Bhairab Bazar, Bajitpur, Nikli Dompara, Tarail and from thence by a line bearing north-east. Westwards of this coast the country is a land of dead and drying rivers thickly populated by a most industrious race."

Report on Bhairab-Bazar-Nebrakona-Maimensing Railways,
(Reconnaissance Survey) p. 1.

31. "अथापश्यत् स उदये भास्करं भास्करद्युतिः ।

सीमं चैव महाभागं विशमानं दिवाकरं ॥

अमावास्यां प्रवृत्तायां सुहर्षे रौद्र एव तु ।

देवासुरश्च संगमः सोऽपश्यदुदये गिरौ ॥

लोहितेश्च घनेर्बुक्ता पूर्वां सस्यां शतक्रतुः ।

अपश्यलोहितोदश्च भगवान् वरुणाक्षरं ॥"

(महाभारत वनपर्व २२४।१२—१३)

32. "ततो रक्तजलं भीमं लोहितं जलं सागरम् ।

गता प्रेक्ष्य तां चैव वृद्धतीं कूटशाल्मलीम् ॥

गृह्णन् देवतेश्च नानारत्नविभूषितम् ।

तम कैलाससङ्गाशं विहितं विश्वकर्माणां ॥

Now this home of Garuḍa, as described in the Rāmāyana, is evidently the Gāruḍāchala now known as the Gāro hills and also called Manda-saila in the Joginitantra, probably after the Mandehas mentioned above. It appears that when the epic was composed, there were to be seen white-houses of some civilised people in some parts of these hills, while other parts were peopled by uncivilised formidable mountaineers.

In course of time this Red Sea gradually receded and the vast low swamp which was once its bed still retains the name of "Sāgar" as a proof of its former existence. The river Lauhitya (modern Brahmaputra) flowing through Assam still recalls the familiar name of the Sea—"the Lohita-sāgara." Even now throughout the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur, Lohit is the name for the Brahmaputra.

"By settling along the Syrian coast, they developed a strangely non-Semitic love for the sea"—this observation made by the writer in the Encyclopædia Britannica (11th edition, art. Phœnicia) on the Phœnicians, seems also to be too hasty a conclusion; for love for the sea was no new development with the Pazis, being al-

तव शैलनिभा समामन्दं हा नाम राक्षसाः ।

शैलप्रदेशेषु लब्धस्ते नानादृशाः भयावहाः ॥”

(रामायण किष्किन्धा० ४०।२८—४१)

Then having crossed the terrible Lohita sea full of blood-red waters, you will see a mountain overgrown with huge Sālmali trees. The palace of Garuḍa, designed and constructed by Viśvakarmā, the engineer-god, and set with precious stones and looking like Kailāsa itself, will also meet your eyes. You will also find hanging on peaks, the terrible Mandeha Rākshsas of dark and terrible forms.

most inherent in their blood, as shewn by the Rigveda.

It may safely be asserted that neither ship-building nor the art of navigation could be of Syrian or Egyptian origin. In neither of these countries were ship-building materials available, while Indian woods supplied large quantities of the timber necessary for the purpose. This is admitted even by those who hold that Syria and Egypt were the original centres of ship-building, for, according to them, the Phœnicians of Syria imported the wood from India and built ships at the docks of their own ports where foreigners came and were initiated into the art of navigation. We do not, however, endorse this view, but rather go so far as to assert that both ship-building and navigation were known to the *Panis* of Eastern India from time immemorial and it was at their feet that others had to sit to learn these secrets. The southern part of Syria was named Phœnicia after the *Panis*, who went and settled there passing through the Red Sea (*Lohita-sāgara*) of Eastern Bengal. The great Phœnician vessels "Tarshish-ships" were the "East-Indiamen," of the ancient world.³³ Their speed was not, according to all authorities, rivalled even by the Greeks in the hey-day of their prosperity. This reminds us of a very early connection of the Phœnians with the East. That Eastern India was a great centre of sea-going vessels, from which enterprising sailors in the early centuries of the Christian era ventured out to distant lands and set-

33. Vide *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (9th Ed.) Vol. XVIII. p. 803 and (11th Ed.) Vol. XXI. p. 154.

ship-
ing and
igation
Pani
teach-
of the
world.

tled in Ceylon, Java, Sumatra and other countries, civilizing them and opening new eras in their sculptural and architectural life is now an established fact of history. In Eastern India ship-building and navigation have not yet become wholly things of the past. Not an insignificant number of sailors expert in navigating in rough seas are even now to be found in Chittagong and other parts of Eastern Bengal, where sea-going crafts are also built every year.

It is thus a matter of no small congratulation to ourselves that this sacred land of ours was also the cradle of that primitive race of traders, who, over four thousand years back,³⁴ carried the torch of civilisation to Assyria, Babylon, Greece and other ancient countries.

The Panis were not extinct as a race in the Punjab even after the sway of the Vedic Aryans had been established over the whole of India. We learn from the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* that Jada-bharata was born of a *Brāhmaṇa* family of the Angiras stock during the reign of King Rāhūgana in the Punjab. The Panis of Sauvira were then worshippers of Bhadrakālī. Having been blessed with no male issue, their chief was arranging to propitiate the goddess by sacrificing a human being before her. Jada-bharata was engaged in watching a field. Officers of the Pani-chief seized him for the purpose of offering him as sacrifice to the deity. The bathing ceremony of the victim was performed according to the *Vaisasa-samsthā*³⁵

Panis in the Punjab.

34. According to western historians the Phœnicians colonised the coast of Syria between 3000 and 2500 B. C.

35. A note on *Vaisasa* may be deemed desirable here. This is what the *Bhāgavata* has got to say—

observed by the Panis, when he was led amidst flourishes of music to the image of the goddess. With a view to worshipping the deity with the hot blood of Jadaabharata, the chief of the Panis himself held a sharp sword in his hand and waited for the auspicious moment of the sacrifice. The goddess, however, on this occasion, became more humane and saved the Brāhmana victim from the jaws of terrible death by swallowing at a gulp the Pani-chief with all his relations and followers. Such an impossible thing became possible only by virtue of the observance known as Mahābhichāra.³⁶

The Pani-chief of Sauvira³⁷ or Sind has been described in the Bhāgavata as Vrīshala meaning 'not following Vedic observances.' It was this difference in religious observances that was the cause of all the oppressions of this race at the hands of the powerful Vedic Aryans. Although gradually they were deprived of all their powers

“अथ पण्यस्तं स्त्रिविधनाभिचिच्छाहतेन वाससाच्छायं सूषणालिपस्वक्त्तिलकादि-
भिरुपस्त्रुतं मुक्तवन्तं धूपदीपमाज्यालाजकिशलयार्द्ररफलोपहारोपेतया वैशस-
संस्थया” (भागवत ५.११.५)

Then Panis, according to their own custom, bathe the victim, cover him with a piece of cloth, decorate him with ornaments, besmear him with sandal and other sweet scents and sumptuously feast him. After this he is sacrificed to the deity with offerings of incense, light, garlands, buds, flower, fruit &c. This ceremony is called Vaisasa Samsthā.

36. Bhāgavata, Sk. V. Chap. 9.

37. Sauvira is mentioned as Ophir in the Book of Kings in connection with the powerful Phœnician prince Hiram of Tyre. Solomon the great king of Israel equipped with the help of that Phœnician monarch a great naval expedition which sailed from Ezion-geber to land of Ophir, and brought the famous cargoes of the wealth of Ind about 975 B. C. (Vide I King ix. 26 : x. 11. 22.)

their rise
the wes-
n world.

and possessions in India, they were more fortunate in establishing their supremacy and kingdom in the more ancient parts of the western world. The colony established by them came to be known as Phœnicia after their own name Pazi or Panika. In the ancient Scriptures and inscriptions of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Greece, are to be found brilliant records of the achievements of this race and of their kingdom. The Phœnicians believed that their rise took place thirty-thousand years ago³⁸ and also that their ancestors had migrated to Phœnicia from the ancient country on the shores of the Eastern Sea.³⁹ In the early history of Phœnicia are to be found frequent hints here and there of the hardships and difficulties that attended the colonists when they migrated here, by land and sea, from their original home.⁴⁰

Like the primitive Vedic Aryans, the Phœni-

38. Africanus in Syncellus, p. 31.

39. Herodotus vii, 89.

40. Even the Rigveda is not silent as to the calamities that overtook the Panis on the sea when they were leaving the mother-country for good. In I. 182. 5—6 we find the following—

“युवमेतं चक्रयुः सिन्धुषु प्रथमात्मन्वंतं पक्षिणं तौष्ण्याय कं ।

येन देवा मनसा निरुहयुः सुपतनीं पेतयुः चोदसो महः ॥

अवविह्वं तौष्ण्यामसू तरनारंभये तमसि प्रविह्वं ।

चतस्रो नावो जटलस्य जुष्टा उदन्विभ्यामिषिताः पारयन्ति ॥”

(१।१८२।५—६)

“Ye twin Asvins, ye were pleased to build for Tugra (a descendant of king Tugra of the Pazi family) in the sea famous vessels furnished with strong wings. Among the gods, only you were pleased to take him up and thus saved him from meeting with a watery grave. When he was going down helpless into the dark and deep waters of the sea, four ships, sent by the Asvins, came to his rescue and safely carried him across.”

Phoenician
worshipped
many gods
and were
given to
human
sacrifices.

cians also first worshipped rivers, the sky, the earth and nature. In course of time even the worship of many gods obtained with currency among them. They did not, however, build any image but used particular emblems representing particular deities for purposes of worship. Mermaids (the upper part being like that of a woman and the lower part like that of the fish or serpent) also came to be worshipped by them. Young ones and males of all classes of beasts were sacrificed by them only for removing special grievances of the king or saving him from some grave dangers. Human beings were also offered as sacrifice and, for this purpose, simple inoffensive tender boys of his own subjects were selected. It is very likely that the custom of offering human-sacrifice the Phoenicians brought with them from India. The story of Jāṭabharata described above shows that the ancestors of the Phoenicians, the Pāṇis of India, practised it before they left the mother country. And like Sindhū-Sāvira of the above story, many chiefs, even royal personages of Phoenicia, generally officiated as priests in the worship of the principal deities.

Their
acquaintance
with Vedic
lore and
culture.

It has been noticed above that some of the Pāṇi chiefs in India used the Vedic language of the Aryans. The Rishis who supported them are found to have invoked on them the blessings of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, the twin Asvins and the Ribhus. Some of the Pāṇis were taken even into the fold of the Vedic Aryans and probably afterwards became merged in the Aryan community.

Western antiquarians have decided that Phoenician culture and influence spread over Asia

Minor and the whole of southern Europe about 2000 years B. C. We do, however, believe that the Phoenician colony of Asia-Minor was established long before that.

The date of the spread of Phoenician culture over Asia Minor and Southern Europe

It has not yet been ascertained when the *Panis* left India by sea and established the colony of Phoenicia along the coasts of Syria. From the account left by Herodotus, however, it is found that the very ancient capital of Phoenicia, the city of Tyre, was founded 2300 years before him i.e, in 2756 B. C.⁴¹ In these circumstances it may fairly be concluded that the *Panis* must have deserted the shores of the Red Sea or left India long before this date. From a consideration of the legend telling how Sargon I (about 3800 B.C) crossed the Eastern Sea⁴², it will also appear that the *Panis* colonised themselves in Syria so long back as 5717 years from now. And subsequently they gradually extended their sway as traders and rulers over Egypt and Asia Minor.

As we have seen, the *Panis* in India after having suffered repeated reverses at the hands of the Vedic Aryans, were either merged in the society of the conquerors being included in the mercantile community or tried to maintain their individuality and independence by taking shelter in forests and mountains, but only to their ultimate degeneration in contact with uncivilised peoples. The Phoenicians of the western world also fared no better. Just as in India, so also here systematic attempts were made long after by the Vedic Aryans to undermine their influence. It was by these Aryans, sworn enemies

Struggle for supremacy in the Western world between the *Panis* and the Vedic Aryans.

41. Herod, ii. 44.

42. Ency. Britannica, 11th ed, Vol. xxi, p. 450.

of the *Panis*, that the Vedic culture of India was spread not only in Babylon, but in the far-off countries of Asia Minor and Syria. It may not be deemed out of place to discuss here how the torch of Vedic civilisation was carried to these countries.

Just as in the *Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa* we have found Aryan rulers advancing eastward with their priests and armies, diffusing the light of Vedic lore and religion over Eastern India, so from the story of *Saramā* and the *Panis* in the *Rigveda*, related above, we find indications of Aryan culture and civilisation having spread westward, beyond the bounds of Western India, to far-off regions. From a study of the very ancient tablets discovered in various places of Babylon and Asia Minor, western archæologists have declared that over four thousand years ago the Kassites and the Mitannis, both of whom spoke Aryan languages, conquered Babylon and gradually extended their influence upto Asia Minor. Thus writes Mr. H. R. Hall the Egyptologist and Assyriologist of the British Museum,—

“There is little doubt that the Kassites were Indo-Europeans, and spoke an Aryan tongue. Their chief god was *Sūryash*, the Sun, the Indian *Sūrya* ... They were evidently the advance-guard of the Indo-European southern movement which colonized Iran and pushed westward to the borders of Asia Minor. In the north the kingdom of Mitanni was about this time established between the Euphrates and Tigris by Aryans who must have been of the same stock as the Kassites who conquered Babylonia. The names of the kings of Mitanni which are known

to us in later times are Aryan and among the gods of Mitanni we find the Indian Varuna, Indra and the Nāsātya-twins (Asvins). It is possible that the mass of the population in Mitanni was of partly Semitic, partly Hittite blood, and that the Aryans there were merely a ruling caste." 43

Some modern western scholars regard these Aryans as being a branch of the Iranian stock. We are, however, unable to endorse this view but are strongly disposed to regard them as a branch of the Indo-Aryan family—for the following reasons.—The names of gods appearing in the above quotation in reference to the Kassites and the Mitannis, do not bear the least resemblance with Iranian names ; on the contrary they are found to be in close conformity with the names of Indian Vedic gods. Besides, just as during the spread of Vedic culture over Eastern India the common people are found to have been non-Aryans or belonging to the Dravidian stock, while the ruling class was uniformly Kshatriyas and their priests Brāhmanas, the same state of things is found to have been the case during the subjugation of Babylon and Asia Minor upto the Tigris and the Euphrates. In their contemporary tablets and inscriptions the descendants of those Aryans who conquered the country from Babylon to Asia Minor, are found to have described themselves as Kharri. Now, European antiquarians have interpreted Kharri as Aryan. Needless to say that this Kharri is only a degenerate form of the

The Kassites and the Mitannis—not Iranians but Indo-Aryans.

43. Hall's Ancient History of the Near East (3rd ed. 1916) p. 201.

Indian word Kshatri or Kshatriya. In the Purāṇas of India the Kassites are found to have been named as Kāsas or Kāsyas. The territory of Kāsi was established by these Kāsas and also named after them. The Aryan allies of these Kāsas were called Mitannis, which is only another form of the Sanskrit word, *Mitrānika*, meaning allied forces. The territory of Mitanni was founded due north-east of Syria or immediately beyond the north-eastern boundaries of Phoenicia.⁴⁴

Phoenicians
ousted by
the Khattis

Just as the Vedic Aryan Kshatriyas succeeded after a long series of strife to stamp out the influence of the Pazis in India, the Kassites and their ally, the Mitannis, also succeeded gradually in weakening the influence of the Phoenicians in Asia Minor till ultimately the Khattis (known as Kheta-Khattis or Hittites), an ally of the Mitannis, succeeded in usurping all the powers of the Phoenicians. Not content with this, the Khattis went further. Instead of Phoenicia, they called their conquered territories Sur or Suriya, thus putting the seal of their government and religion upon these regions, and also announcing their opposition to the Asuras or Assyrians. It was from this name of Sur or Suriya that the appellation of Syria was ultimately derived.⁴⁵

44. "Across the Euphrates lay the more barren North Mesopotamia, the modern districts of Urfa, Diarbeker, and Mardin, then dominated by Aryan aristocracy of Mitanni."

(Hall's Ancient History of the near East, p. 229).

For the maps of Phoenicia and Mitanni, vide Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th Ed. Vol. XII p. 526.

45. "Syria is probably the Babylonian *Suri* used of a north Euphratean district and a word distinct from Assyria." Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th Ed. Vol XXVI. p. 304.

H. R. Hall justly remarks,—“The Phoenicians preserved their individuality intact from the days of Thothmes III to those of Alexander. Their merchants pursued uninhibited and intrepidly their way to the utmost end of the Mediterranean and beyond, and the trading-factories were now founded that soon developed into the great colonies of Gades, of Tharshish, of Utica and Carthage”.⁴⁶

After their influence had dwindled into nothing, some of the Phoenicians intermingled with the trade-loving Jews, while the rest became merged in other Semitic races. Hence no trace of the Phoenicians, once so powerful, is to be found now in the country once proudly named after them. It will suffice to say roughly that it was these Panis or primitive traders, who, long over four thousand years back, and before any other nation had even thought of it, astonished the whole civilised world by inventing the art of glass-making, by the introduction of alphabets,⁴⁷ by their art of navigation and by their skill in carving out huge temples in mountains. They had no rivals in the art of navigation. It was at their feet that the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans had to sit to be initiated into this art. In directing their course on the trackless sea, the Pole-star acted as their guide; and hence it was that the Greeks gave to this guide the name of the Phoenician star. With their utmost efforts the Greek vessels could

Phoenicians
ultimately
intermingle
with the
Semitic races

Their
chievements

46. Vide The Ancient History of the Near East, p. 402.

47. The history of the introduction of alphabets by the Panis has been discussed at length in connection with the origin of the Indian alphabets in the Visvakosha, Vol. XVII. art Varṇalipi.

not vie in speed with the Phoenician ones. Their maritime trade spread from Spain to the coasts of Malabār and thus brought immense wealth to them. Their huge wealth and their uncommon skill in naval warfare combined to bring under their sway all the ancient rich territories along the coasts of the Mediteranean including Syria. Nay, it was also they who, more than four thousand years ago, succeeded in bringing the Indian merchandise to the markets of Southern Europe. Egypt which is recognised in the western world as being the primitive centre of civilisation—even that Egypt is found to have been largely indebted to this race of primitive traders for many items of the civilised life. Mr. S. Laing thus observes—"There can be no question that this Phoenician commerce was a principal element in introducing not only their alphabets, but many of the early arts of civilization, among the comparatively rude races of Greece, Italy, Spain and Britain."⁴⁸

Although Indians have long forgotten the very name of the *Panis*, the cream of milk is even now called *Panir* in the Hindi dialect, and the particular creeper with the help of which the *Panis* prepared curd in early times, is even now found in Sind to be called after them—*Panir* (*Withania coagulans*).⁴⁹ Even now the blood of that ancient civilised *Pani* family is found to run in the veins of the *Baniks* or merchant races of India.

Those among the *Panis* who did not allow themselves to be mixed up with the Vedic

48. Vide S. Laing's *Human Origins*, p. 77.

49. Vide Watt's *Dictionary of the Economic Products of India*, Vol. VI, pt iv. p 309.

Aryans or would not even acknowledge their suzerainty, maintained independence by retiring to the other side of the Karatoyā. Fate was, however, against them. Overtaken by reverses of fortune, and driven from their home to live the life of the exile among uncivilised hill-tribes, they gradually lost their own culture and civilisation for which they had fought so hard. Yet for a long time, in Kāmarūpa and its neighbourhood the names of Pāni continued to be given them, and now, for many years past, they have been given the name of 'Pāni-koch'. Even now in the Dekkan, a branch of this race has retained the original name in a slightly modified form, being called Pāniār.

It is thought necessary to discuss here how the name, Pāni-koch, came to be applied to this degenerated branch of the Pānis.

We have the following description of this branch of Pānis in Bhāgavatapurāṇa :—

"In the Rasātala (lower regions), a branch of Daityas and Dānavas known as the Pānis, otherwise called Nivāta-Kavachas and Kālakeyas lived in Hiranyapura. They were hostile to the gods. So the valiant and ever resplendent Hari—the adored one—vanquished them by his power and forced them to live like snakes (dwellers of the caves). These Pānis are still afraid of Indra owing to the artful words of Saramā the messenger of that god."⁵⁰

Origin of
the name
Pānikoch

50. "ततोऽधस्तात् रसातले दैतिया दानवाः पण्यो नाम निवाचकवचाः कालक्रेया हिरण्यपुरवासिनः इति विबुधप्रलयनीका उत्पत्त्या महौजसो महासाहसिनो भगवतः सकललोकानुभावस्य हरेरेव तेजसा प्रतिदत्तवलावलेपा विलेशया इव वसन्ति । ये वै सरमयेन्द्रदूत्या वाग्भिर्भक्तवर्षाभिरिन्द्रादिभ्यति ॥" (Bhāgavata, V. 24. 30)

Thus the author of the Bhāgavata has made it sufficiently clear that the Nivāta-Kavachas were no other than a branch of those very Panis who are referred to in the story of Saramā and the Panis in the Rigveda. (x. 108f) In the Rāmāyana, the Mahābhārata, and many of the Purānas also references are to be found to these Nivāta-Kavachas.⁵¹

It is stated in the Rigveda as already shewn by us that to reach the territories of the Panis Saramā had to cross the river Rasā which flowed into the Indus and then jointly poured itself out into the sea.⁵² The "Rasātala" of the Bhāgavata seems to be identical with the land to the

We are told in the Padma-purāna (*Sṛishti-khanda*, Chapter 19) "that upon the murder of the Asura Vṛitra the Kālakeyas in great fright fled to the shores of the furious sea in the Dekkan. Since then the sea became their home, which they left only at night to destroy people found upon the shores. Even sages and seers were not spared, many of whom were forcibly carried to their watery home, while others deserted their hermitages along the beach and took refuge in mountain caves. At length they sought the protection of the powerful Seer Agastya, who crossed the Vindhya hills, came to the Dekkan, drunk up the sea and slaughtered the Kālakeyas. The few that could save their lives by flight, took refuge in Rasātala."

From this account it seems that the Kālakeyas were a powerful sea-faring race of the Dekkan who wore gold armours and wielded huge maces. They fared ill at the hands of Agastya, who, as we have found in the Rigveda, was a sworn enemy of the Panis, and propagated Aryan culture and civilisation in the Dekkan.

51. Vide the Rāmāyana *Lankākāṇḍa*, Ch. 113 ; the Mahābhārata, *Vanaparva*, Ch. 171 ; and the *Brahmāṇḍa-purāna*, (which has been published by the Asiatic Society and the Vangavasi Press as *Vāyu Purāna*, ch. 68). For the defeat of Kālakeyas or Panis by Chitraratha, Vide *Padmapurāna Sṛishtikhanda*, Ch. 19 and 63.

52. Rigveda X. 22. 4.

south of this river and close to the sea. We have also spoken before on the authority of the Bhāgavata of a race of Panis in Sindhu-Sauvira (modern Sind). To the south of this Sind and along the coasts of modern Karāchi there was a territory known in the Mahābhārata and the Purānas as the Kālakavana (wood of Kālakā or Kālakeyas).⁵³ There can be no doubt that this wood formed at least one of the principal headquarters of that family of the Panis known as Nivāta-Kavachas. There are accounts in the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata of the defeats inflicted upon them by Rāvana and Arjuna respectively.⁵³ It is not improbable that the Panis of the Nivāta-Kavacha branch came in course of time to be known by the abbreviated name of Pani-Kavacha. It will be no presumption to suppose that again in course of time this 'Kavacha' came to be pronounced as 'Kocha' and thus Pani-Kavacha, became Pani-koch.

The Rik-mantras described by Seer Gotama Rāhūgana, priest of King Videgha Māthava, who spread the culture of the Vedic civilisation in Eastern India as for as Kāmarupa breathe a spirit of downright malice against the Panis. This is a clear proof of the very great resistance that the latter must have offered to the movement in Videha or Eastern India. But as we have seen, with all their stubborn resistance they could not hold their own but were driven farther and farther from their home till a party of them was forced to seek shelter near the Lohita-sāgara or Red Sea also known

53. Vide Hindi Vivakosha (Encyclopædia Indica) Vol. II p. 695.

Utkachas
or
Northern
Koch

as the Eastern Sea ; and some of them, who took shelter in the mountains of Kāmarūpa, came in course of time to be known as Panikoch. A branch of these inhabiting the Eastern frontier regions of the Himālayas has been called in the Purānas as Utkachas⁵⁴ or Uttara

54. The following lines occur in the ancient Brahmandā purāna (published under the title of Vāyu-purāna) in connection with the description of Devakūta, the Eastern frontier mountain of India—

“ द्वितीये द्विजशाहूँला मर्यादापर्वते शुभे ।
महाभवनमालाभिर्नानावर्णाभिरावृतम् ॥
सुवर्णमणिचित्राभिरनेकाभिरलंकृतम् ।
विशालरथ्यं दुर्द्धर्षं नित्यं प्रसूतितं शिवम् ॥
नरनारीगणाकीर्णं प्रांशुप्राकारतीरणम् ।
षष्टियोजनविस्तीर्णं दशयोजनमायतम् ॥
नगरं कालकीयानां दानवानां दुरासदम् ।
देवकूटतटे रस्ये सन्निविष्टं सुदुर्जयम् ॥
महाविधयसङ्काशं मुनासं नाम विश्रुतम् ॥
तस्यैव दक्षिणे कूटे त्रिशदयोजनविस्तरम् ।
द्विषष्टियोजनायाम् हेमप्राकारतीरणम् ॥
द्वष्टपुष्टावलिमानामावासाः कानरुपिणाम् ।
उत्कचानां प्रसूतितं राक्षसानां महापुरम् ॥
मध्यमे तु महाकूटे देवकूटस्य वै गिरेः ।
सुवर्णमणिपाषाणैश्चिह्नैः शृङ्गातरेः शुभे ॥
शाखाशतसङ्ख्यादैर्नैराकारोऽसमाकुलम् ।
स्निग्धपर्णं महामूलमनेकस्तम्बवाहनम् ॥
रथ्यं ह्यविरलच्छायं दशयोजनमण्डलम् ।
तत्र भूतवटं नाम नानाभूतगणालयम् ॥
महादेवस्य प्रथितं वाक्चक्रस्य महात्मनः ।
दौमसायतनं तत्र सर्वलोकेषु विस्तृतम् ॥” (४४।१२—१०)

Upon the second frontier mountain is situated an invulnerable city of the Kalakeyas. It is decorated with beautiful edifices of splendid colours and adorned with gold and jewel. The roads are very wide, and the whole city is gay, flourishing and well-fortified. People of various races inhabit it. The grand

(Northern) Kavachas. In all the ancient chronicles of Assam it is said, that prior to the rise of the Mléchchha rulers of the Naraka dynasty Kāmarūpa was governed by the Dānavas and the Kirātas. It is superfluous to say that everywhere in the Purānas composed by Aryan Brāhmanas the Pani-Kavachas have been spoken of as Dānavas.

outer gate-way attached to the surrounding wall is very high ; it is sixty *yojanas* wide and one hundred in length. This invulnerable city is situated on the beautiful Devakūta mountain, and called Sunāsa. It looks like a gorgeous cloud. To the south of it, there is a huge city of the Rākshasas, 30 *yojanas* wide and 62 *yojanas* long, the surrounding wall and the gate-way of which are all gold. Here live the proud and haughty, strong and stout Ut-Kachas who are Kāmarupī.* There is on the Devakūta mountain a huge tree, of the name of Bhūtavata. Thousands of branches have shot out in all directions. It is surrounded by walls of rock, gold and precious stones. It is the abode of a host of Bhūtas and has on it the farfamed splendid home of Tryambaka (Three-Eyed Mahādeva.)

It has been remarked above that it was the Panis who were given the name of Kālakeyas in the Purānas, and were also called Nirāta-Kavachas. And it was also a branch of these Panis inhabiting the far-off Eastern frontiers of the Himalayas, that were called Uttara-Kavachas or Ut-Kavachas, abbreviated in the Brahmandā-purāna into 'Utkachas'. Making all allowances for the above exaggerated descriptions of their chief towns, it has to be admitted that even in their mountain homes, the Panis were not yet destitute of their former wealth and splendour.

From the above description of Devakūta and the Bhūtavata flourishing on it, it seems that it was the mountain-range extending from the Bhutan hill to the hills of Assam and Kachar that was called the "frontier-mountain Devakūta." The derivation of Bhutan from Bhūtavatasthāna (the place of the Bhūtavata) seems to be quite probable. Owing to its situation on the Devakūta mountain, Bhutan is even now called Devarājya (country of Deoraj)

* It seems that probably they are the original inhabitants of the place giving it the name of Kāmarūpa on account of the peculiar custom developed by them.

We have it also on the authority of the *Rāmāyana* that at the time of *Rāmachandra* there was above the vast and fathomless home of *Varuna* (i. e. above the sea) a mountain with golden peaks, called *Varāha* and covering an area of 64 *yojanas*, and upon this mountain was situated a city of gold known under the name of *Prāgyotisha* where dwelt a vicious *Dānava*, *Naraka* by name.⁵⁵

It has again been said in the *Kālikā-purāna* that *Naraka* was brought up by *Janaka*, king of *Videha*. At the age of sixteen he came to *Prāgyotisha* which was then peopled by the uncivilised *Kirātas* addicted to meat and drinking. *Ghaṭaka* was the name of their leader. *Naraka* defeated him and drove away the *Kirātas* to the other side of the river *Dikkaravāsini* (modern *Dikrong*). He then settled in *Prāgyotisha* and made it his capital. He had a large number of *Brāhmanas* and other high caste people brought here and made grants of land to them. He was a staunch devotee of the *Kāmākhyā* goddess. It is said, in his jealous regards for the goddess, he did not allow even the sage *Vasishṭha* to enter the temple. Furious at this *Vasishṭha* cursed him which is said to have brought about his downfall (Ch. 36)⁵⁶

Naraka

55. “योजनानि षतुःषष्टिर्वराहो नाम पर्वतः ।
सुवर्णैश्चक्रैः सुमहानगाश्च वरुणादये ॥
तत्र प्रागज्योतिषं नाम जातद्वयमयं पुरम् ।
तस्मिन् वसति दुष्टात्मा नरको नाम दानवः ॥”

Rāmāyana, *Kishkindhyā-kāṇḍa*, ch. 42.

56. Both the *Kālikā-purāna* and *Yoginitantra* seem to be guilty of an anachronism here. According to these, *Naraka* was an *Asura*. *Krishna* killed him and installed his son *Bhagadatta*

From the account of Naraka in the Rāmāyana as well as from the first portion of the story of Naraka as related in the Kālikā-purāna it seems that after their influence had been eclipsed by the rise of the Aryans in Eastern India, many families of the Panis took shelter in hills and mountains. The seer king Janaka found the Pani-prince Naraka in one of these wild habitations, brought him to Mithilā, his capital, and reared him with care. Long before his time the land of Kāmarūpa to the East of the Sadānirā or Karatoyā was included in the territories of Videgha Māthava, when the influence of the Vedic Brāhmanas was established here. It was during this period of Aryan supremacy that the city of Prāgjyotisha was founded. The Vedic Aryans, however, could not reign here long in peace. The Kirātas of the neighbourhood made occasional raids upon the city till they cleared it of the Aryans. Afterwards the Pani or Dānava prince Naraka came here.

on the throne. How can Naraka a contemporary of Vasishtha, Janaka and Rāmachandra, be again a contemporary of Krishna who flourished centuries later.

Naraka, according to one authority, is a Pani Dānava, and, according to another, is the chief of the Mlechchhas and an Asura. Evidently we have here two different persons bearing the same name. In the Brahmanda-purāna, one Bhauma and Naraka of Sainhikeya line is said to have been killed by Parasurāma. (68.19-21). It seems very likely that all the princes of this place, from the Treta age down to the time of Bhagadatta, were known by the general designation of Naraka. The 'Naraka' of the Atharvaveda (xii. 4. 36) is no other than the territory governed by these Naraka kings. Later Pauranic writers, however, have identified the different Narakas and ascribed the incidents of their different lives to one Narakāsura. We shall speak of him in connection with the spread of Mlechchha influence.

He defeated and drove them off and himself assumed the reins of government. It is not unlikely that he began his rule as a tributary chief of Videha, when many Brāhmanas came over and settled here. After a short time, however, his Pami spirit got the better of him, and he began to ill-treat and oppress the Aryan Brāhmanas against whom, the Pamis had all along ranged themselves. This cost him both his throne and life.

In Chapter 38 of the *Kālikāpurāṇa* we find the following—"Seer Gotama, priest of the sage king Janaka, solemnised *Kesavapana* and other ceremonies of Naraka with incantations laid down for the purpose in the Rik, Yajus and Sāma-Vedas, in accordance with the custom in vogue among the *Kshatriyas*."⁵⁷

Again in Chapter 39 we have—"well versed in the Vedas, devoted to *Brahmanical duties*, a good statesman, liberal, devoted to the Vedas, and unflinching in his devotion to goddess *Kāmākhya*, Naraka began to rule over the *Nīlakūṭa Hills*."⁵⁸

57. "अथ तस्य वृषथे षो गीतमेन महर्षिणा ।

संस्कारं कारयामास विधिना मानुषेण च ॥

नरस्य शीर्षं खशिरो निधाय स्थितवान् यतः ।

तस्मात्तस्य सुनिश्चे षो नरकं नाम वै व्यधात् ॥

परान् परांश्च संस्कारान् चाविण विधिना मुनिः ।

केशान्तविधिमन्त्रके ऋग्यजुःसाममन्त्रके ॥"

(कालिकापुराण ३८ अः)

58. "नरकोऽपि तदा धीमान् वेदशास्त्रस्त्रपारगः ।

ब्रह्मण्यो नीतिकुशलो वदान्यो वेदतत्परः ॥

कासाख्यापूजनरतो नीलकुटे मङ्गगिरौ ॥ (३८ अः)

तस्मात् किरातानुत्सार्य वेदशास्त्रानुगान् बहन् ।

विजालीन् वासयामास तव वर्षान् सनातमान् ॥

And Chapter 40 tells us later—"After a reign of 5000 years, at the instance of Bānāsura, Naraka took to oppressing the gods and the sages."⁵⁹

According to the *Rāmāyana* also, Naraka the king of Prāgyotisha is a contemporary of Rāmachandra and Janaka, and belonged to the Dānava family. While the *Mahābhārata*, *Harivamsa*, the *Bhāgavata* as well as some other works tell us that Naraka who flourished prior to the great Kurukshetra war and was a contemporary of *Srikrishna*, sprang from the Mlechchha or Asura stock. He flourished towards the close of the Dvāpara age and was killed by *Krishna*.

From the above conflicting accounts it is evident that the Naraka of the *Rāmāyana* and the Naraka of the *Mahābhārata* could never be the same person. One was initiated into Kshatriya rites, while the other also discharged Brāhmanic functions.

It seems that all kings of Kāmarupa, prior to the ascendancy of the Kirāta family, passed under the general name or title of Naraka. It will suffice to point out here from the quotations made above that although all the Naraka kings or families, who flourished prior to the reign of the Mlechchha or Asura Naraka, were either Dānavas or Panis, some of them at least would have observed some of the Kshatriya rites with the help of priests invited from Mithilā. It has

Naraka a
general title

वेदाध्ययनदानादि सततं वर्त्तते यथा ।

तथा चकार भगवान् सुनिर्वासयन् प्रभुः ॥" (३८ अः)

59. "एवं देवान् दासमानो मुनीन् विप्रान् क्षितेः सुतः ।

पञ्चवर्षं सहस्राणि राज्ञां प्राग्ज्योतिषं करोत् ॥" (४० अः)

been already noticed from the *Rigveda* that some *Pani* kings of the preceding generations also did the same. Those who followed the Vedic cult were probably recognised by some as *Kshatriya* kings. In spite of this, among the *Narakas* of *Kāmarūpa*, however, there were many who would not shrink, wherever opportunity offered itself, from feeding fat their racial grudge upon the Aryans who were loyal to the gods and the *Brāhmanas*. And for this reason the *Brāhmanas* also treated them with contempt or suspicion. Such a state of affairs went on long till some powerful *Mlechchha* over-powered the *Panis* or the *Kochas* with the help of the *Brāhmanas* and installed himself on the throne of *Kāmarūpa*. And according to the custom in vogue he also assumed or was given the name of *Naraka*. The royal house thus overthrown, fled to the Eastern sea-coast where, with the help of the *Kirātas* themselves, they founded a new government and began to rule over the *Kirātas*. And either to preserve the purity of blood or in quest of supremacy over foreign and distant lands, some of them might have sailed over to and settled in the western world.

In the *Kalikāpurāṇa* (Ch. 38) we are further told—the *Kirātas*, unable to withstand the oppression of *Naraka* of the *Mlechchha* dynasty first went over to and settled on the Eastern side of the *Dikkara-vāsini*. Subsequently, through the intervention of *Mahādeva*, it was settled that their possessions should extend from the Eastern sea to *Lalitakāntā*, while the country from the west of *Lalitakāntā* to the east of *Karatoyā* was

jurisdiction
of the
Kirātas

to be the jurisdiction of the Goddess Kāmakhyā.⁶⁰ This was purged clear of the Kirātas and a large number of Brāhmanas and people of other higher castes, well-versed in the Vedas, were made to settle here. It has been observed before that a time was when the Lohita-sāgara of the Rāmāyana and the Pūrva-sāgara of the Manu-samhitā and Kālikāpurāṇa spread over a large part of Eastern Bengal, washing the feet of even the Gāro, Khasia, Jaintia and Kachār Hills. The modern Kachāris are no other than descendants of those Utkachas and the Kirātas, who inhabited the Eastern shore of this Eastern sea mentioned in the Brahmāṇḍa and the Kālikāpurāṇas. The royal house of Kachār has ever since its foundation passed as having descended from Ghaṭotkacha, son of Hiḍimbā. According to the Revākhaṇḍa of the Skanda-purāṇa Ghaṭotkacha married the daughter of Bhagadatta, king of Prāg-jyotiṣa.⁶¹

Kachāris
are really
Utkachas
and Kirātas

According to Bhavishya Brahmakhaṇḍa, Digvijaya-prakāśa, Desāvali-vivṛiti and Assam Buranji as well as local traditions, the ancient name of Kachār is Haiḍimba or Hiḍamba, and

- 60 “एवमुक्त्वा स्वयं विष्णुः शम्भोरनुमते तदा ।
सर्वान् किरातान् पूर्वस्यां सागरान्ते न्यवासयत् ॥
पूर्वं खलितकान्तायाः समादायावधिं पुनः ।
यावत् सागरपर्यन्तं किरातास्त्रावदावसन् ॥
पश्चात् खलितकान्ताया देशं कृत्वावधिं पुनः ।
करतोयानदीं यावत् कामाख्यानिर्णयन् तत् ॥”

(कालिकापु० २८ अः)

61. The issue of this marriage was a son named Barbarika, who distinguished himself in time as a great soldier. Skanda-purāṇa, Revākhaṇḍa, Ch. 50-54, gives a detailed account of him.

Ancient
name of
Kachār.

Dimāpur in Assam is said to have been once the capital of the Ghaṭotkacha dynasty. Many people are of opinion that Dimāpur is only a degenerated form of Hiḍimbāpur.⁶²

The title
of Ghata
or Ghataka,
common to
Kachāri
princes.

It has already been noticed that Ghaṭaka was one of the earliest Kirāta chiefs. Just as in the Tretā and the Dvāpara age the predecessors of Bhagadatta on the throne of Kāmarupa were all given the common name of Naraka, so also the earliest Kirāta princes might have been given the common title of Ghaṭa or Ghaṭaka. Hence we find that even the son of Hiḍimbā, upon his accession to the Kirāta throne, came to be called Ghaṭa after his predecessors. The addition of 'Utkacha' to this title in his case, making it Ghaṭotkacha, seems to have been due to his descent from the Utkacha or Northern Koch family. It has been observed before that according to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* a branch of the Kālakeyas or Panis inhabiting the hill-tracts of Assam making up the Eastern frontier of India, were known as Utkachas. This Utkacha or northern Koch were afterwards called Kachār or Kachāri. Hence, if Ghaṭotkacha is taken as the chief of the Utkacha or Koch and the Kirātas inhabiting the Eastern sea-coasts, it has to be admitted that although begotten of as high-caste a father as Bhima, his mother's non-Aryan blood stood in the way of his recognition as an Aryan. The story of Ghaṭotkacha goes some way to prove how harshly and contemptuously the Panis or Kālakeyas were treated by the later Brāhmaṇa community. It may be no exaggeration to

62. A. Gait's *Assam*, p. 246.

observe that the oppression of the Brāhmanas reached such a height as to compel the Panis or Utkachas to live away from civilised society and to take to the Rākshasa (cannibal) way of life. Thus compelled to live, move and have their abode among the Kirātas whom we find described in the Rāmāyana as 'carnivorous man-tiger's,⁶³ the Panis gradually adopted their manners and customs; and hence, although these two people are racially different, their descendants (the Kachāris from the Utkachas and Kirātas, and the Koch from the Panis), have appeared to later ethnologists as belonging to the same stock, the difference in name being assigned to difference in their places of residence.

A tradition is also current in Kāmarūpa to the effect that the Kochas were the first to establish their supremacy here and among the Koch also there is a general belief based on traditions that a time was when the whole of Eastern India acknowledged their supremacy, till out of dread for Parasurāma they became destitute of all their martial traits and were deprived of all their worldly possessions.⁶⁴

This is borne out also by the fact that in the much older *Rigveda* and the other *Saṃhitās* they

63. Vide Rāmāyana, Kishkindhyā, Ch. 40.

64. The tradition is also corroborated by the Kālikāpurāṇa (Chap. 77). Thus—

“जामदग्न्याभयभौतः क्षत्रिया पूर्धमेव ये ।
 स्नेच्छद्दान्यपादाय जल्लोशं शरणं गताः ॥
 ते स्नेच्छवाचः सततमार्थवाचस्य सर्वदा ।
 जल्लोशं सेवमानास्तु गोपयसि च तं हवः ॥
 तवैव तु गथास्तस्य महाराज मनोहराः ।
 शोषयित्वाथ तान् सर्वान् जल्लोशं पूजयेन्नरः ॥” (७७ अः)

have never been spoken of as "Dānavas" or "Rākshasas"; rather they have been described as high-spirited Kshatriyas or Vaisyas showing that they occupied a high status in society. Yet they have been spoken of as Dānavas in the early history of Kāmarūpa. Needless to say that owing to their opposition to the Vedic rites and ceremonies as well as to the Brāhmaṇas, they were given the appellation of Dānāva by the Brāhmaṇa authors of the Purāṇas. The persecution by Parasurāma which has passed into a tradition current everywhere among the Koch, is a clear proof of the fact that having been deprived of all their former prosperity and supremacy, by the Brāhmaṇa influence, they removed themselves to the mountains of Assam to maintain their racial integrity and independence. Some of the Koch families are also known by the name of 'Paliyā', about the significance of which Sir H. Risley has truly observed—

"The name Paliyā is said by some to refer to the flight (*palāyana*) of the supposed Kshatriya ancestors of the tribe, but it is equally possible that it may be merely a variant of the first half of the name Pani-Koch by which the people now calling themselves Paliā were known at the beginning of this century, when Dr. Buchanan made his survey of Dinajpur and Rangpur."⁶⁵

Indeed, the word 'Pani', according to the different ways in which the cerebral 'n' (न) in it may be pronounced, may sound as Pani

The name 'Paliyā' as applied to the Koch.

or 'Pañ' which may have in course of time assumed the form of Paliā. Hence we may assert that the Pani-koch, the Paliā and the Koch of succeeding ages are no other than the Pani-Kavachas of the Paurāṇic age. It has already been noticed, in discussing the situation of the Lohita-sāgara or Red Sea, that in the Rāmāyana a race of cannibals also called Mandeha is said to have inhabited the mountains on the shores of the Lohita-sāgara. It has also been shown that the Lohita-sāgara or the Red Sea also called Pūrva-samudra, or the Eastern Sea according to Manu-saṃhitā and Kālikā-purāṇa flowed by the south of the Gāro hills and the west of the Kachār and Chittagong hills. Taking into consideration the situation of Prāgiyotisha above the fathomless home of Varuna, as described in the Rāmāyana, the modern Brahmaputra also may be taken to have been a part of this Red Sea. The Mandehas, then living on the shores of this sea, have now come to be known as Mandai or Koch-Mandai. About this people Sir H. Risley says—

The Mandehas also a branch of the Kochas.

"The Koch-Mandai of Bhowal forest tract in the north of Dacca appear to be a branch of the Koch who have long been separated from the main body of the tribe and have to some extent intermingled with the Gāros."⁶⁶

In the Rāmāyanic age the Mandehas lived in the Gāro hills on the shores of the Lohita-sāgara and their habitation was called Mandahills in the Joginitantra. No wonder, if in contact with the cannibal Gāros, they also came to develop ferocious qualities of character. The

66. Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol. I. p. 493.

epithets of 'Rākshasas' and 'Dānavas' given them by the authors of the *Purāṇas* may thus have been due to their opposition to the Vedic rites and to their ferocious conduct. The Ut-kachas seem to be the northern, and the Mandehas the southern branch of the Koch. Hence the latter are even now found to cherish the memory of the old connection by calling themselves Koch-Mandai.

About the Koch Col. Dalton says—"They assumed the name of Pani-Koch to distinguish themselves from their hill neighbours, the Gāros, with whom they were often confounded in consequence of the similarity of their manners and customs; but their religion and language resemble rather those of the Rabha than the Garo."⁶⁷ The language spoken by the Koch "is all Bengali, Hindi or Assamese, not a word or grammatical construction that would affiliate them with any North-Eastern tribes".⁶⁷

From the influence of the Bengali, Assamese and Hindi Languages upon the Koch tongue it appears that Eastern India was their original home, Bengal or Mithilā being their primitive mother country.

On the strength of the passages quoted above from the *Rigveda* and the *Bhāgavata* we may now safely say that at least 6000 years back this race inhabited Karachi and Kachh (Cutch) in Western India and the southern regions of the Punjab. And the Sumerians known to modern antiquarians are no other than the descendants of those members of this people who, by land, went to Babylon, and

67. Dalton's *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 92.

other countries. About these Sumerians H. R. Hall writes thus—

“We have no knowledge of the time when the Sumerians were savages : when we first meet with them in the fourth millennium B. C. they are already a civilised, metal-using people, living in great and populous cities, possessing a complicated system of writing, and living under the government of firmly established civil and religious dynasties and hierarchies The earliest scenes of their own culture-development had perhaps not been played upon the Babylonian stage at all, but in a different country, away across the Persian mountains to the eastward. The land of Elam, the later Susiana, where till the end a non-Semitic nationality of Sumerian culture maintained itself in usual independence of the dominant Mesopotamian power, was no doubt a stage in their progress The ethnic type of the Sumerians, so strongly marked in their statues and reliefs, was as different from those of the races which surrounded them as was their language from those of the Semites, Aryans, or others ; they were decidedly Indian in type. The face-type of the average Indian of to-day is no doubt much the same as that of his Dravidian race-ancestors thousands of years ago. Among the modern Indians, as amongst the modern Greeks or Italians, the ancient pre-Aryan type of land has (as the primitive type of the land always does) survived, while that of the Aryan conqueror died out long ago. And it is to this Dravidian ethnic type of India that the ancient Sumerian bears most resemblance, so far as we can judge from his monu-

ments. He was very like Southern Hindu of the Dekkan (who still speaks Dravidian languages). And it is by no means improbable that the Sumerians were an Indian race which passed, certainly by land, perhaps also by sea, through Persia to the valley of the two rivers. It was in the Indian home (perhaps the Indus valley) that we suppose for them that their culture developed. There their writing may have been invented and progressed from a purely pictorial to a simplified and abbreviated form, which afterwards in Babylonia took on its peculiar "cuneiform" appearance owing to its being written with a square-ended stylus on soft clay ... There is little doubt that India must have been one of the earliest centres of human civilisation and it seems natural to suppose that the strange un-Semitic, un-Aryan people who came from the East to civilize the West were of Indian origin, especially when we see with our eyes how very Indian the Sumerians were in type."⁶⁸

Panis
settling in
Sauvira and
Babylonia

Incidentally it has already been observed that it appears from the authority of the Rigveda that the Panis had a principal centre to the west of the Rasā, which flowed into the Indus through Khorāsān and Afghānistān. After the Vedic Aryans had succeeded in depriving the Panis of their possessions, the latter bade good bye to this centre of their influence and were divided into two parties, one sailing along the Indus and ultimately settling in the region of Sauvira, and the other marching straight into Babylonia through Khorasan. The Kālakeyas

68. Hall's Ancient History of the Near East, p. 172-174.

had no doubt a principal centre in Sauvira (Sind) and Hiranyapura. But even here they could not live in peace; the Aryans attacked them very frequently and made their life very miserable, till some of them found it necessary to migrate to the Dekkan and others took to the hills of Eastern India.

The Sauvi-
ra Pazis
migrate to
the Dekkan
and Eastern
India

It seems that that branch of these people which sailed along the Rasā and settled in Babylon subsequently came to be known by the name of Sumerian after the place of their residence. Whether out of dread for the Vedic Aryans or for any other cause, they may have studiously concealed their original racial name Pazi.

Who were
Sumerians

By discussing the references to the Pazis in the Vedas it has already been established that, in point of culture, wealth and influence, they had been recognised as a strong and powerful race even before Aryan civilisation and authority were established over the whole of India. In the Vedas they are said to have a *syāva* or dark-brown complexion. There is room for but little doubt that in the hey-day of their prosperity this people carried the torch of Indian civilisation up to Asia Minor. Subsequently, having been repeatedly defeated by the white-skinned Aryans on the field of western India, a branch of them gradually moved off to Eastern India and the Dekkan. Those who settled in Eastern India and maintained their integrity and independence as well as their religious faith, came to be known in subsequent ages as Pazis or Kālakeyas. From the quotation made above from the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*, we have got a fairly clear idea of the high state

A highly
civilised
race even in
pre-Aryan
days of
India

Eastern India continued to be their home for many thousands of years

of culture (as evinced by their towering palaces and decorated towns) that obtained among them even in the hilly homes of Assam. From a study of the language, manners and customs, rites and observances of the modern Koch it will be established that it must have been many thousands of years before this people vacated Eastern India. That even from here they carried on their maritime trade is clear from the fact that even their disciples in the art of navigation, the people of Eastern Bengal and Chittagong, occupied and even now occupy the highest rank among the sea-faring peoples of India.

Panis are of Sumerian origin and identical with the Phenicians

On the strength of these facts we do unhesitatingly regard the Panis also as a branch of the ancient Sumerian race⁶⁹ and as identical in

69. The whole of North Assam was once known as Saumāra. According to Yoginī-tantra—

“पूर्वे स्वर्णनदी यावत् करतोया च पश्चिमे ।

दक्षिणे मन्दरील्लय उत्तरे विहगाचला ॥

अष्टकीर्णं च सीमारं यत् दिक्करावासिनो ॥”

Saumāra is an octangular country bounded on the east by the river Svarna or Sonkoshi and on the west by the Karatoyā, on the south by the Manda or Garo, and Khasiya hills and on the north by the hill known as Vihagāchala. Through this tract of land flows the Brahmaputra. This Saumāra is subdivided into nine Pithas (holy seats). These are—1 Ajaya off the Dikkara. Here is installed and worshipped goddess Dikkaravāsini. 2 Nilapitha. The presiding deity is Goddess Kāmesvari representing the generative organ of Sakti. 3. The holy seat of Pārijāta. 4 Kausheyapura. 5. Amarakantaka. 6. Aranya. 7. Asvina. 8. Gautamāranya (the wood of Gautama), and 9 the wood Sivanātha. The last seat, the wood of Sivanātha has also been known as Saumāra-pitha.

From the above quotation it seems that Saumāra was an ancient name for the greater portion of Kāmarupa, and that this tract of land was divided into nine pithas. It has not yet been

blood, and faith, manners and customs with the ancient Phœnicians. After this if western antiquarians and ethnologists can establish that

ascertained when the name of Saumāra was conferred. According to Yoginī-tantra, there was a Kauravya lady of the name of Kānkati. During the Kurukshetra war she was residing far away from the scene on the summits of the Chandra-Chūḍa hills. During one of her monthly courses she felt very amorously inclined. It happened that Indra, the king of gods, came across her at that time and the issue of this intercourse was a sinful son of the name of Arindama. Through the grace and support of Indra he ascended the throne of Kāmarupa. It was his sons who passed as Saumāras. (Yoginī-tantra ii-44). It is very difficult to say how far or if at all this story can have any historical value. This much, however, can be asserted that the Saumāras were not and could never be the original inhabitants of the place. It has been already noticed that the people and rulers of south Babylon had for over six thousand years been known as Sumer. It was also very probably not unknown to them that their ancestors were descendants of Indian royal houses. Their queen was called "Bau" (equivalent to Sanskrit Bāhū). (Hall's Ancient History, p. 179). Again, from the account of the Kauravya King Bālīka Prātiṣya in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (xii. 9.3.3) it appears that some princes of the Kauravya dynasty were once ruling, across the north-western frontiers of India, even over Balkh or Babylon and its neighbourhood. Some antiquarian scholars are found disposed to regard these Kauravyas as descendants of a very ancient Indian people, now known as Kaurava or Kaur, belonging to the Dravidian stock. (Rieley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol. I, p.).

It was these Saumāras or Indian Kauravyas who appear to have been described as *syava* or dark-brown in the *Rigveda*. It is very likely that after the extinction of Sumerian influence in Babylon some one or other of the sons of the Sumerian Queen Bau happened to come over to Assam in quest of his fortune, and with the help of some leader of the Vedic Aryans succeeded in wielding supreme authority in Kāmarupa. In that mystic way in which events of that mystic age were recorded, this patronage may have been ascribed to Indra, the chief god of the Vedic Aryans. The territories and descendants of this Sumerian King seem to have been called 'Saumāra' after the name of his

the Sumerians were of Dravidian stock, we also shall have no objection to accepting the

original home. This conquest of Kāmarupa may have taken place sometime after Bhagadatta and his confriars of this part of the country had laid down their lives in the Kurukshetra war.

Although according to Yoginī-tantra, the whole of Kamarupa may have once passed as Saumār, the wood of Sivanātha is the real Saumārpitha. (ii. 1) According to Assam Buranji the Saumār pitha extends from the river Bhairavi or Bharali to the river Dikrai. Hence it is clear that the whole of North-Eastern Assam was given the designation of Saumarpitha, meaning the seat of Sumerian influence and authority. Again, as we learn from the Buranji, owing to their residence in upper Assam, Ahom princes of the Indra dynasty also have passed as Saumāras. Facts, however, have not yet been gathered finally settling at rest the question of the descent of the Ahom princes from the Sumerian blood. Quite recently a Babylonian cylinder seal has been discovered in Central India and preserved in the Nagpur Museum. On one side of it are to be seen two huge human figures, to the left of which is a small Goddess standing with hands raised in adoration before Adad, the weather god of ancient Babylon. Besides these there are to be seen on this side symbols of the sun and the moon and three small human figures. On the reverse there is a cuneiform inscription which has been deciphered to mean that this seal is a coin issued by one Liburbeli, a devotee of Adad. This cuneiform inscription seems to be of about 2000 B.C. (Vide *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. X. (1914) p. 42). Now, does not this seal also lead one to suspect that long before its date the Sumerian or Dravidian culture of India had found its way into Babylon and other distant lands?

Strangely enough, the inhabitants of the hills to the north of that portion of Assam which passes as the Saumār pitha, are called Aka, just as South and North Babylon were called Sumer and Akkad respectively. It has not yet been found out if the Aka had any affinity of blood with the ancient Akkad. He, however, traces his descent from King Bhaluka, founder of Bhalukpung and son of Kumbhānda, minister to the Asura King Bāna (Vide E. A. Gait's *History of Assam* (1906), p. 17.)

Koch, descendant of the Panis, as being of Dravidian origin.⁷⁰

"Sumerians were always clean shaven as to the face, and usually (though not always) also

70. Something need be said here as to the true race the Koch belongs to. Since the Mlechcha or Mech supremacy there has begun to flow in the veins of many a Koch family an intermixture of Mlechchha and Koch blood. And consequently a marked change has taken place in it both in physical and mental constitutions proportionate to the percentage of this foreign element. Where, however, he succeeded in keeping himself aloof, the Koch will even now be found to have considerably preserved his individuality and integrity. In olden times the race established its supremacy in Kamarupa or more properly in the western regions of Assam. The very name of Koch-Bihar is significant that it was one of the principal scenes of Koch achievements. Although persecuted and deprived of all their own successively by the Vedic Aryans and the Mlechchas, yet it was here in Koch-Bihar or Kamarupa that they succeeded, after a hard struggle for existence, in maintaining their national individuality. This was chiefly due to the fact that other classes of people were naturally averse to mixing freely with this depressed and oppressed class. In Eastern Assam, however, where Aryan influence had not yet been so well established, the Koch was still held in esteem and regard as before, and others felt themselves honoured by an alliance with him. This is still the case in this part of the country and 'Koch' still continues to be a term of exaltation, as evident from the fact that Kacharis, Lalungs and Mikirs proudly assume the title of Koch, when they come under Hindu influence and their circumstances are improved. This accounts for the steady increase noticeable in the number of Kochas here. Whereas in North Bengal and Goalpara, on the other hand, it is a term which is falling into disrepute ; and it has to a great extent been abandoned in favour of the appellation of Rajbansi."

In Eastern Assam, owing to an intermixture of blood, the Koch complexion has undergone considerable change. And this has led some ethnologists to class him as of the Mongolian race. A study of the physical and mental constitutions of the pure Koch of Western Assam and North Bengal will not however corroborate this classification, on the contrary it will prove that he really comes of the Dravidian stock.

as to the head, and their priests performing religious rites were all shaven."⁷¹ Needless to say that although this practice even now obtains in Eastern India, it has not come down from the Vedic Aryans, who could not take part in religious performances with shaved heads or without their turbans on; while, as among the Sumerians, among the *Panis* also, priests with shaved heads performed religious rites.

Some crucial tests leading to the identity of *Panis* and Phœnicians

Let us now examine the constitution, the manners and customs of the ancient *Panis* or the modern Koch and see if there is nothing common between these and those of the people of distant Phœnicia.

1. "Probably in allusion to the dark complexion of the race", the Greeks called the Phœnicians blood-red".⁷² The *Panis* or the *Kālakeyas* also have been described in the *Purānas* as being of dark complexion; and the *Pani-Koch* or *Koch* of modern times also are found to have a blood-red or dark brown complexion.

2. In the *Purānas* the *Panis* or *Kālakeyas* inhabiting the frontier mountains of Eastern India are said to be living in mountain caves over which their edifices reared their lofty heads. Compare this with the following description of the ancient Phœnician house—

"Phœnician architecture had its beginning in the widening and adaptation of caves in the rocks. The independent building of later times

71. Hall's Ancient History of the Near East, (1916), p. 172.

72. Ency. Britannica, 9th Ed. Vol. XVIII, p. 803.

constructed of great blocks of unhewn stone, are direct imitations of such cave-dwellings.”⁷³

Even to this day in the hilly tracts of Assam some Pami-Koch families are found to dwell in mountain-caves. And wherever any monument is discovered, it is found to be in close conformity with the description quoted above.

3. “The Phœnicians did not set up anthropomorphic statues of the gods, but symbolic pillars of stone or in the case of the queen of heaven, of wood (asherāh). If an actual image was used, likeness to man was avoided by fantastic details: the god had two heads or wings, or some animal emblem or was dwarfish or hermaphrodite and so on.”⁷⁴

It has previously been noticed that according to the Bhāgavata the Pami-chief of Sauvira was a votary of Bhadrakālī. Now, like the “queen of heaven” of the Phœnician, the image of this goddess of the Pamis also was made of wood. In her case also ‘likeness to man’ was avoided, as the dhyāna in Kālikāpurāṇa tells us, by giving her a terrific form with sixteen hands.⁷⁵ Does it not correspond with the “fantastic details” of

73. Encyclopædia Britannica, 9th ed. Vol. XVIII. p. 810.

74. Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th ed. Vol. XXI. p. 456.

75. The following account of Bhadrakālī is found in Kālikāpurāṇa.

“योगनिद्रा सङ्गमाया जगद्धात्री जगन्मयी ।
सृजौ षोडशभिर्युक्ता भद्रकालीति विस्तृता ॥
क्षीरोदस्योत्तरे तौरे विभती विपुला तनु ।
अतसीपुष्पवर्णाभां ज्वलत् काञ्चनकुण्डला ।
जटाज टसखण्डेन्दुमुकुटभ्रमभूषिता ॥
नागहारेण सहितं स्वर्णहारविराजिता ।
शूलं खड्गं शङ्खं च यत्र च बाणं वयैव च ॥

the Phœnician image? Even up to this day the worship of Bhadrakālī is in vogue among the Pani-koch. Like the "symbolic pillars" representing Phœnician gods, a large number of symbolic pillars have also been discovered in Dimāpur, the ancient capital of the Utkacha or Ghaṭotkacha (modern Kachār) house. On these pillars of Dimapur Sir A. Gait writes—

"Inside the enclosure are some ruins of temple, or perhaps a market place, the most marked feature of which is a double row of carved pillars of sandstone, averaging about 12 feet in height and 5 feet in circumference. There are also some curious V-shaped pillars which are apparently memorial stones. The nearest point at which the sandstone for these pillars could

शक्तिं वज्रञ्च दण्डञ्च नित्यं दक्षिणवाहुतः ।
विष्वतीं सततं देवो विनाशि दशनोज्ज्वला ॥
खेटकं पूर्णचापञ्च पाशमङ्कुशमेव च ।
चण्डां पशुञ्च सुषलं विष्वतीं वामपाणिभिः ॥
सिंहस्थानं नयनैरङ्गवर्णैस्त्रिभिरभिज्ज्वला ।
शूलैर्न सहस्रं भित्ता तिष्ठन्ती परमेश्वरो ॥"

(कालिकापु० ६० चः)

In the Treta age Māhamāyā (the female principle underlying creation) appeared as sixteen-handed Bhadrakālī on the northern shore of the Kshiroda ocean. Her complexion was like that of the *atasi* flower (somewhat like burnished gold) ; rings of bright gold adorned her ears, her hair was matted with a crown on it, the forehead was adorned with a half-moon, snakes coiled themselves into a necklace round her neck decorated with another of gold. In her right hands she wielded a spear, a sword, a conch-shell, a discus, an arrow, Sakti, the thunder-bolt and a sceptre ; while her left hands were armed with a mace, a shield, a bow, a noose, an iron goad, a bell, a battle-axe and a club. She had three eyes, all blood-red, and was seated on a on.

have been quarried is at least ten miles distant. ... No two are precisely alike in ornamentation, but all are of one general form, having large semi-circular tops, with concentric foliated carving below on the shaft. There are representations of the elephant, deer, dog, duck and peacock, but nowhere is there a human form or head."⁷⁶

Do not these symbolic pillars of Dimapur and their workmanship remind us of the ancient Phœnician style of architecture and worship?

4. There are hints in the *Rigveda* of a certain class of *Panis* who were enemy to the Aryans and given the epithet of *Sisnadevas* or worshippers of images representing male and female energy. In the *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa* also the *Kālakeyas* of *Kāmrupa* have been described as worshippers of *Siva* (the male energy)⁷⁷ Again we have the following from *Kālikāpurāṇa*—"Out of dread for *Parasurāma*, the descendants of the ancient royal house of *Kāmarupa* disguised themselves as *Mlechchhas* and sought the protection of the *Jalpīsa Linga*. They worshipped him and always spoke the *Mlechchha* and the *Aryan* tongue. This God not only sheltered them, but extended a large amount of patronage to them—so much so that they passed as *Gana* (retinue) of *Jalpīsa*, and no worship would be acceptable to him unless and until these were first propitiated."⁷⁸

Needless to say that this *Jalpīsa Linga* was from time immemorial in charge of the *Koch*

76. Sir E. A. Gait's *History of Assam*, p. 245.

77. *Brahmaṇḍa purāṇa*, chap.

78. *Kālikāpurāṇa*, Chap. 77.

Linga-wor-
ship a
pre-Aryan
institution.

family ; and it was they alone who, in ancient times, were recognised as his sole priests and votaries. At first the Vaidika Brāhmanas were opposed to this Linga worship and branded its worshippers as knaves. Thus in Padma-purāṇa we come across the following injunction—"A Brāhmana should never worship the Siva-linga. Water, rice, flower, leaf &c offered to this deity should never be accepted by him. Should any Brāhmana violate these injunctions and worship Linga, he shall at once fall from the rank of the Brāhmana." 79 Needless to say that from the Vedas, the Rāmāyana, the Mahā-bhārata and the Purāṇas it is evident that prior to the spread of Aryan influence over the whole of India, the Linga-worship was confined through out Āryāvarta and the Dekkan to the Daityas, Dānavas, Asuras and allied races. Hence it may safely be taken that the royal house of Kāmarūpa, described in Kālikāpurāṇa as given to Siva-worship in their dread for Parasurāma, is really a Pāṇi family. It is very likely that it was the pre-Aryan Indian who gradually introduced Linga-worship into the western world. It is well known that thousands of years back the ancient Phœnicians as well as their followers the Assyrians worshipped the Linga (symbol of male energy) of the God Baal. Like the "Sisna-devas" (worshippers of

79.

“अन्नद्वयत्वमापन्नो न पूज्योऽसौ हिजन्मास ।

तस्मान्न जलमन्नं तु तस्मै दत्तं हविस्तथा ॥

शिवस्यान्नं जलञ्चैव पत्रं पुष्पं फलादिकम् ।

निर्घोषमस्य चाग्राह्यं भविष्यति न संशयः ॥’

(पाद्मे उपनिषद् ७८ अ.)

the *Sisna* or Sexual organ) of the *Rigveda*,⁸⁰ these votaries of the *linga* of *Baal* also have been given in the Bible the epithet of *Shiun* or *Chiun*.⁸¹ The *Linga* worship of the *Phœnicians* was a very indecent ceremony. From the account left by *Lucian* we come to know that there was in a certain temple of *Syria* a *linga* full 300 fathoms high. Upon careful consideration and observation of the ancient *Sākta* or *Saiva* temples discovered in *Assam*, the following remark has been generally made—

Phœnicians
and
Assyrians
also were
linga-worshippers.

“*Sivite* shrines built on the ruins of a different type of temples abound in *Kāmarupa*, and to many of them the test of antiquity by which the age of the deposits in *Egypt* were calculated might be applied, as they are found in places far below the surface.”⁸²

Even down to this day *Kāmarupa* is found to enjoy the honour of being the first seat of *Sakti-worship*. And the secret of this honour lies in the joint worship of *Siva* and *Sakti* (male and female energy) which is in vogue here. To me it seems that the *Sakti-worship* of this place has been handed down from the *Panis* who were the first to introduce worship of the female energy.

The *Sakti*
worship of
Kamarupa
seems to
be of *Pani*
origin

The *Yoni-piṭha* of *Kāmākhyā* is thus described in *Kālikāpurāṇa*—“Upon a solitary peak of the *Nilakūṭa Mahāmāyā* passes her days with *Mahādeva*. The emaciated private parts of *Satī* have been petrified, and inside these dwells the

80. *Rigveda* VII. 21. 5, X. 99. 3.

81. *Ezekiel* XVI. 17. *Amos*. V. 25-27.

82. *Dalton's Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 79 and *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, no 1. for 1855.

goddess Kāmākhyā along with Mahādeva in the form of the Linga.”⁸³

“Surrounding Kāmākhyā Devī the Asta-Saktis (eight different forms assumed by the Female Energy) are residing here as tutelary deities of the Pīṭha ; Heruka and others, the eight Kshetrapālas (protectors of holy places) are guarding the eight directions. In this away throughout the length and breadth of Kāmarupa Siva and Sakti are enjoying themselves in the forms of Yoni and Linga.”⁸⁴

Phoenician
and
Kāmarupa
methods of
worship are
similar.

There was a time when the Phoenician method of worship was exactly akin to the worship as detailed in Kālikāpurāṇa and even now found in vogue in Kāmarupa. The western historian thus writes on this point—

“The Phoenicians offered worship on every high hill and under every green tree, but to judge from the allusions to sanctuaries in the inscriptions and elsewhere, the Baal or ‘Ashtarte of a place was usually worshipped at a temple, which consisted of a court or enclosure and a

83. “नीलकूटे मया साहं देवी रहसि संस्थिता ।

सत्वास्तु पतितं तत्र विशेषं योनिमण्डलं ॥

शिलात्वमगमच्छैले कामाख्या तत्र संस्थिता ।

संस्पृश्यतां शिलां सत्प्राज्ञमर्त्तप्रलभवाप्नुयात् ॥”

(कालिकापु० ६२ अः)

“उपासितुं तथा देवीं कामाख्यां कामरूपिणीं ।

नीलशैलस्त्रिकोणस्तु मध्यनिम्नः सदाशिवः ।

गुह्यं मनोभवा रम्या मनोभवविनिर्मिता ।

योनिस्तस्यां शिलायान्तु शिलारूपा मनोहराः ।

वितस्तिमात्रं विसौर्षां एकविंशद्गुणायता ।

सिन्दूरकुङ्कुमारत्नासुव्विकामप्रदायिनी ॥” इत्यादि

roofed shrine with a portico or pillared hall at the entrance. In the court sometimes stood a conical stone, probably the symbol of 'Ashtarte, as on the Roman coins of Byblus (illustrated in Rawlinson, *Phoenicia*, p. 146). Stone or bronze images of the gods were set up in the sanctuaries, and besides these the *bætylia* (meteoric stones) which were regarded as symbols of the gods. Pillars again, had a prominent place in the court or before the shrine."⁸⁵

Again, the present temple of Kāmākhyā will be found to conform closely to the style of architecture displayed in the Phœnician temples according to the description quoted above. No doubt this temple is not very ancient, having been built during the supremacy of the Mlechchhas influenced by the Koch way of life—yet it is equally true that it has followed the ancient style of architecture that once obtained here. Besides, the Yoni-pīṭha of Kāmākhyā will be found to be no other than that "Conical stone" which the Phœnicians called "the symbol of 'Ashtarte." And the goddess 'Ashtarte of the Phœnicians is no other than Goddess Kāmākhyā or a concentrated form of the Mahāsakti. And yet these are not all. Just as in *Kālikāpurāṇa* we find instructions laid down for the worship of the *Ashṭa Kshetrapālas* (eight protectors of holy places) round Kāmākhyā, so there are indications of the Phœnicians worshipping the eight *Cabiris* in their holy places.⁸⁶ Again, one and the same idea is found underlying the

The temple of Kāmākhyā follows the style of Phœnician temples

85. *Ency. Britannica*, (11th ed.) Vol. XXI. p. 457.

86. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (11th Ed.) Vol. XXI. p. 456-57.

Further
similarity.

conceptions of Kāmākhyā and 'Ashtarte, both "representing the principles of fertility and generation." In all the seats of Sakti or Yoni (female energy) in Kāmarupa will be found also the Linga (male energy) associated with it. Similarly in Phœnicia the symbol of Baal (male energy) was found whenever the conical stone or Yoni representing 'Ashtarte (female energy) was worshipped.

Phœnician
modes of
sacrifice

5. The Phœnicians also offered animal sacrifices to their Baal and 'Ashtarte just as animal sacrifices are made even now in Kāmākhyā. The following lines tell us of the Phœnician mode of sacrifice—

"The sacrifices were of oxen and other male domestic animals—as expiatory offerings also stags, and for minor offerings birds. Human sacrifices were exceptionally offered by the State to avert great disasters; the victim was chosen from among the citizens and must be innocent, wherefore children were chosen, and by preference firstborn or only sons."⁸⁷

The Panī
sacrifice

In the course of the story of a certain Panī-chief of Sauvira we have already found from the Bhāgavata that once he offered a human sacrifice. The reason for this human sacrifice was this. To propitiate Bhadrakālī to bless him with a male issue, the Panī-chief was going to sacrifice a male animal before the deity when, somehow or other, the poor creature made good his escape and could not be retraced. Fearing a severe displeasure of the goddess and consequent visitation of calamities upon

87. Encyclopædia Britannica, (9th Ed.) Vol. XVIII p. 803.

the State, his officers proposed to propitiate her by offering a human sacrifice, and accordingly carried off Jaḍa-bharata from the fields for the purpose.⁸⁸ In *Kālikāpurāṇa* also instructions have been laid down for offering as sacrifices to Kāmākhyā and the Bhairavas all sorts of male animals and birds, not excluding even the ox and the boar. On the contrary it is suggested that the blood of these two animals can purchase good graces of the goddess for a year, while human blood will secure her smile for three thousand years.⁸⁹ To offer human sacrifices was, however, a royal prerogative; and no one else could do it without his sanction.⁹⁰ Under British Rule, the offering of human sacrifice has, no doubt, been forbidden; and for the last three hundred years or thereabouts Brāhman supremacy in Kāmākhyā has done away with the ox

88. Vide *Bhāgavata*, V. 9. 12—15. also p. 23-24 of this book.

89. “पनिष्णः कच्छया याज्ञा मत्स्या नवयिषा मृगाः ।
महिषे ऽजायिका भावम्हामो वधुय शूकरः ॥
खड्गश्च कृणुसारश्च गोधिका शरभो हरिः ।
शार्ङ्गश्च नरश्चैव स्वर्गावकविरं तथा ॥ ...
गोगोधिकानां रुधिरं वार्षिकौ हस्तिमांसयात् ।
नरेनैवाथ मांसेन विमलस्त्वन्तु वत्सराजम् ।
हस्तिमांसोति कामाख्या भैरवो नम रुपदृक् ॥”
90. “दृष्टुं नरवर्ति मृदाः सम्पत्त्या विभवाय च ।
वृषाननुमतेर्भक्ष्यं हृदत् पापमवाप्त यात् ॥”

(*Kālikāpurāṇa* Ch. 67.)

This custom was not only prevalent in the Royal house of Koch, but also among the Kacharis, Jaintias and other Assam tribes.—Vide *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1898, p. 56.

sacrifice also.⁹¹ Other male beasts and birds are, however, even now offered as sacrifices in Kāmākhyā. But in other parts of Assam among the orthodox Pani-Koch the old custom is not yet forgotten.

In this connection one fact stands out very prominent. Like the Phœnicians the people of Kāmarupa also are found to be averse to the slaughter of female animals. On this point the following injunction is laid down in Kālikāpurāna—"Not to speak of women even the females of beasts and birds must never be sacrificed."⁹² Even to this day the Koch and Kachāri communities are found scrupulously to observe this prohibition.

Although it is superfluous to observe that both Kalikāpurāna and Yoginī-tantra owed their origin to Brahmanic influence and ascendancy, yet it is curious that from what has been noted in both these works in connection with the local traditions and manners and customs of Kāmarupa it seems that in the remote past Brāhmans were not allowed within the

The Koch like the Phœnician of old is averse to female sacrifice.

At first Brahmanas not allowed to worship Kamakhya.

91. Although cow and human sacrifices have been sanctified in Kālikāpurāna, the Yoginītantra speaks nowhere of the latter, while, with regard to the former it lays down the following prohibitive injunction—

“अकालौ तु गवां मांसं सारमेयश्च तत्त्ववित्”

(योगिनीतन्त्र उत्तर ५म पटल)

The cow and the fox are both forbidden for sacrificial purposes in the Kaliyuga. From this it appears that while cow-killing was a forbidden thing when the Yoginītantra was composed, it was not so when Kālikāpurāna was published.

92. “पशूनां पक्षिणाञ्चापि नराणाञ्च विशेषतः ।

स्त्रियं न दद्यात्तु बलिं दत्त्वा नरकमाप्नुवात् ॥”

(कालिकापु० ६७ अः)

bounderies of Kāmākhyā for purposes of Sakti-worship. This view is also confirmed by the story of Vasistha's cursing Siva and Ugratārā as well as Naraka when Naraka would not allow him to enter the temple of Kāmākhyā as related in Kālikāpurāṇa and Yogini-tantra. It is needless to point out that in Kāmarupa the Koch and his follower the Mech were the primitive Śāktas. During their supremacy they would not allow without permission any other race or caste to offer worship in the sanctum of this pīṭha which was their special privilege. Like the ancient Phoenicians among them also it was the male or female chiefs who were allowed the right and privilege of worshipping the Great Energy as represented by the primitive male or female symbol. Baal was the principal god of the Phoenicians. Even now over the whole of Kāmarupa Siva will be found to be the principal deity of the Koch and their 'Buḍā Thākur' (old god) will be found to be no other than the Baal of the Phoenicians.

It has already been noticed that the Phoenicians themselves worshipped Ba'al as representing the Linga or the male principle of creation and their 'Ashtarte represented the Yoni or the female principle. "The worship of the female along with the male principle was a strongly marked feature of the Phoenician religion."⁹³ This form of worship is found to have obtained also with the Pazis or Kochas from time immemorial, and even now it is not altogether obsolete. In the month of Vaisākha Siva is

Linga-worship akin to Baal-worship

93. Encyclopædia Britannica, 11th ed. Vol. XXI, p. 456.

found to receive worship in many places under the name of Buḍā Thākur with his consort. At the foot of some tree a one-cubit high altar is made and artistic designs are engraved on it. Then twelve pieces of stone representing the male and female principle are put upon it and worshipped. Formerly the worship was everywhere preceded by a sacrifice of the boar. It is the most respectable headman or the head-woman of the community who are allowed to officiate as priest or priestess on this occasion. The Koch believe that this worship is a special feature of their religious life, being unknown to all other peoples. Home-made intoxicants, such as wine, hemp and thorn-apple powder are offered to the deity on this occasion. In ancient times they themselves officiated as priests at the the worship of Kālī or Bhadrakālī also, although the Brāhmanās of Kāmārupa have now come to usurp the privilege.⁹⁴

94. Although Bhadrakālī is the principal goddess of Pāñi conception, yet in course of time, according to the special needs of special ages and classes, she came to receive worship even at the hands of some Aryans, just as some of the Pāñis also found it necessary to recognise and worship some of the Vedic Gods. This is why Bhadrakālī is found to have been honoured even in the Sāṅkhyayāna-Grihya-Sūtra (ii. 15. 19.) as well as in the Manu-Saṁhita (iii. 59) in connection with the Vaisvadeva rite. And probably it is this deity who in the white Yajurveda has been described as the sister of Rudra. Taking the sister to wife was considered a duty by the ancient Pāñis or Phenicians. This may have led them to look upon their couple of gods or goddesses as brothers and sisters instead of as husbands and wives. Following them the Aryans also looked upon each goddess as the sister of the god she was coupled with till the age of the composition of the Taittiriya-Araṇyaka when the Aryans, following their own social orders, and in the light of their own

6. To dance before goddess Kāmākhyā, princes and noblemen were found to have been in the habit of engaging maidens as “celestial dancing girls” and maidens were also offered worship as representatives of Sakti.⁹⁵ Indeed, the Jogini-tantra is found to have gone the length of enjoining upon “Maiden worship” as an essential part of Sakti-worship ; and the mode prescribed is simply repulsive, to say the least of it⁹⁶. Thus the maiden was an unavoidable item of Sakti-worship at Kāmākhyā, and quite a large num-

Maiden
worship

ideas, set down the goddesses as the wives of the gods. Since then *devi* (goddess) has all along been regarded by the Aryans as the consort of *deva* (God). The Pani-Koch, however, is even now found to look upon the mother as the principal member of the house and upon the sister as the governess of all household affairs.

95. About this practice the Jogini-tantra thus relates :—

“कुमारीपूजनफलं वक्तुं नाहानि सुन्दरी ॥
तस्माच्च पूजयेद्दवालां सर्वजातिसमुद्भवाम् ।
जातिभेदो न कर्त्तव्यः कुमारीपूजने शिवे ॥ ...
देवी बुद्ध्या महाभक्त्या तस्मात्तां परिपूजयेत् ॥
सर्वविद्यास्वरूपा हि कुमारी नाव संशयः ।
एकाहि पूजिता बाला सर्वं हि पूजनं भवेत् ॥
यदि भाग्यवशाद्देवि वेष्टाकुलसमुद्भवाम् ।
कुमारीं लभते कान्तिं सर्वस्वे नापि साधकः ॥
यत्नतः पूजयेत्तान्त्तु स्वर्णरौप्यादिभिर्मुदा ।
तदा तस्य महासिद्धिर्जायते नाव संशयः ॥
महासिद्धिर्भवेदस्य स एव श्रीसदाशिवः ।”

(योगिनीतन्त्रे पूर्वभागे १७ प०)

96. “गच्छ शीघ्रं योगिपीठं देवीशिवरसाश्रितः ।

भक्त्या कालीं कुलाचारभाववेष्ट्यापरायणः ।
अचिराद्वाञ्छिता सिद्धिर्भविता ते न संशयः ॥
वेष्ट्यामध्यगतं वीरं कदा पश्यासि साधकम् ।
एवं वदति स काली तस्माद्देष्ट्यापरो भव ॥”

(योगिनीतन्त्रे पूर्वभागे १८ पटलः)

ber of these unmarried girls were required to devote themselves to the service of the goddess.⁹⁷ The following lines represent a similar picture of the Phoenician religious life—

“Another horrible sacrifice was regularly demanded by Phoenician religion. Women sacrificed their virginity at the shrine of 'Ashtarte in the belief that they thus propitiated the goddess and won her favour, licentious rites were the natural accompaniment of the worship of the reproductive powers of nature.”⁹⁸

These practices were once in vogue among the Koch also. Although, under the Vaishnava influence spread over the country by Sankara Deva and his followers, many have in later times given up these practices, yet animal food and animal sacrifice are even now universally accepted in the land ; and some people are even now adherents of the old Śākta creed. From this it will be clear that although the ancient

Śākta wor-
ship preva-
lent among
Kochas

97. The prostitute having been canonised to the rank of the goddess herself and recognised as her representative in the Yoni-pitha of Kamakhya, many a man felt tempted to consecrate his unmarried girls to the service of the goddess, blind to the horrible moral degradation that was the natural consequence of this practice. Only a short time ago many such maidens thronged in the temple of Kamakhya, about whom the Yogini-tantra says—

“देव्यायतेनैद्विष्टैः प्राक्तारोद्यानमण्डितैः ॥
पूज्या विचित्रचित्तैः सर्वतः समलङ्घिताः ।
स्त्रियं स्त्रव प्रमुदिता दृश्यन्ते तनुमध्यभाः ॥
हावभारार्पितयौवाः पद्मपद्मायतेक्षणाः ।
यौनोन्नतकुचयुगाः पुष्पचन्द्रसमाननाः ॥
स्थिरालकाः सुकपोलाः काञ्चीमुपुरनादिताः ।
सुकल्पचाकलवनाः कर्णान्नायतलोचनाः ॥” (उत्तरभागे ६ पटल)

Pani race, now degraded to the rank of the Koch, has considerably fallen from its old civilised state as the consequence of the Brahmanic perscecution and overthrow of this power by the Mlechchha or Mech tribes, yet it has not entirely bid good-bye to its primitive faith and ancient rites and observances. On the contrary it exercised a considerable elevating influence upon the Mech, who gradually but unconsciously adapted themselves to this way of life till in the age of the *Purānas*, these two different races came to be recognised as one community speaking the same language.⁹⁹ In both *Kālikā-purāna* and *Yoginī-tantra* we get a detailed account of the religious life and system that sprang into existence from this joint influence of the Koch and the Mlechchha. Although they are written by *Brāhmanas* to promote the cause of Brahmanism, and hence naturally many of the old rites and observances likely to thwart this cause have been left out, yet these two treatises enable us to get a glimpse into the ancient customs of the land. Indeed, very few *Purānas* can claim that historical value which *Yoginī-tantra* and *Kālikā-purāna* do both of them enjoy, as giving an account of the society of *Kāmarupa* in all its stages. Hence it is that we have mainly to rely on the evidence of *Kālikā-purāna* to see how far the religious life and system, manners and customs of the ancient Phoenicians are found

Historical
value of
Kālikapurāna

99. "सर्वमचारता मृदा स्त्रीच्छा गोमल्लघातकाः ।
कुवाचकाः परे स्त्रीच्छा एते ये कूटयोनयः ॥
तेषां देशाचिकी भाषा लोकाचारो न विद्यते ॥"

(*Padmapurana, Srishtikhandā, Chap. 57.*)

reflected in the life of the modern Koch. The authority of this treatise is also borne out from the honour accorded to it by the aged chiefs of the Pani-koch, Kachāris and Jaintias, who affirm that once their influence extended over the whole of Assam and the goddess was worshipped and rites and ceremonials observed exactly as stated in Kālikā-purāṇa.¹⁰⁰

7. From times immemorial the Pani-koch has been in the habit of burying their dead. Although in some places cremation has very recently taken the place of burial, the latter may still be said to be the general and time-honoured practice. There is a fixed place of burial along the river-side. We find in the Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa—

“Now the gods and the Asuras, both of them sprung from Prajāpati, were contending in the (four) regions. The gods drove out Asuras, their rivals and enemies, from the regions and being regionless, they were overcome. Wherefore the people who are godly make their burial places four-cornered, whilst those who are of the Asura nature, *the Easterners* and others, (make them) round, for they (the gods) drove them out from the regions.”¹⁰¹.

It has already been noticed that the Vedic Aryans pursued the retreating Panis into Eastern India, where they were long able to hold their own against their pursuers. Their hostility towards the worshippers of Vedic gods subsequently won for them in the Purāṇas the nickname of Asuras.

Burial in
favour with
the Pani-
Koch

Why Panis
came to be
called Asuras

100. Gait's Assam, p. 243, 254, 261.

101. Egging's Translation of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa.

Before the Phoenicians intermingled with the Egyptians adopting their manners and customs, they made their burial places round. Strange, even now the tomb or sarcophagi of the Pani-Koch is made of round flat stones, sometimes resting on the heads of flat pillars. Again, like the Phoenicians the Pani-Koch also place their dead in a stone-coffin which is then laid down in the circular grave. With them also the tomb is found to be an object of great regards.

8. The Phoenicians had another peculiar practice. The king had very often to officiate as high-priest, just as the queen also had occasionally to play the role of the high priestess. In contemporary Phoenician inscriptions, Tabnit is found to have styled himself priest of 'Ashtarte and king of Sidonians like his father, while his son Eshmunazar calls his mother "priestess of 'Ashtarte and queen."¹⁰² Now this practice is found to have once obtained among the Panis also. The story of the Pani-chief of Sauvira, already quoted from the Bhāgavata, is a clear proof that he himself officiated as priest at the worship of Bhadrakālī. From Kālikā-purāna also we come to know that the Pani or Koch princes who took shelter in the hills of Kāmarupa to escape the wrath of Parasurāma and disguised themselves as Mlechchhas, themselves worshipped their god Jalpisa. Where Brahmanic influence has not been so well established, the Koch patriarchs are found to officiate as priests or Deoshis as they are called. In some places again, even aged and venerable

The King as
high-priest
both among
Panis and
Phoenicians

102. Vide Rawlinson's Phoenicia, p. 336.

women are accorded the honour of officiating as priests. It is superfluous to point out that this is nothing but a remnant of the old practice.

'Ashtarte of
the
Phoenician—
Kāmākhyā
of the Pani
Koch.

9. According to both the *Kālikāpurāṇa* and *Yoginitantra* *Kāmarupa* was recognised (and is still recognised) as a great *Saktipīṭha* even before the rise of the *Mlechchha* or *Mech*. And from the very beginning of this recognition, we find there has been in vogue here the worship of the *Yoni* (procreative power of nature) and of the *Ashta-mātrikās*, as well as the joint-worship of *Siva* and *Sakti* (the passive consciousness and the active unconscious energy). It has been stated above that the Phoenicians also worshipped *Kāmākhyā* or the united energy of the *Ashta-mātrikās* under the name of 'Ashtarte, representing the principles of fertility and generation.

The woman's
influence in
Phoenician
and Pani-
Koch life.

It was this worship of the Mother (female energy) which was responsible for the predominance of the woman in Phoenician society, culminating in the superiority of the sister over the brother, and of the mother over the father. Thus in the Phoenician home the mother and in her absence the daughter, had the predominant voice. And it was this superior position of the daughter which was responsible for the introduction among Phoenician princes of the custom of marrying their own sisters. Ama 'Ashtarte, the mother of the Phoenician king *Eshmunazar* referred to above, was also his aunt, being the sister of his father. It may seem superfluous to note that he was king only in name, while the queen-mother was the *defacto* sovereign. This predominance of the fair sex

found its way also into Kāmarupa society. Although held in great esteem throughout India being a part and representative of the Mother, in Kāmarupa the woman was the recipient of special worship and homage as the living image of goddess Kāmākhyā.¹⁰³

It will be superfluous to remark after this that mother-worship or Sakti-worship as it is generally called, has been in vogue since the days of the primitive Koch or Pani. During the long supremacy of the Pani or Kālakeyas in Assam, many other races related with them or inspired by their example gradually came to adopt their manners and customs and religious rites and observances. This resulted in the recognition and establishment of the un-Vedik Kālakeya ideas and ideals throughout Assam and North Bengal. It is the nature of social life that the rites and observances which have once been long favoured by it, do never become wholly obsolete. Even alien conquerors have often to conform to them, just to win the hearts of the people. This is why, even after the dwindling away of Pani supremacy, their conquerors were obliged to incorporate the accepted principles and practices of the ancient social fabric. The supremacy of the mother noticeable in the Pani-Koch life is simply and evidently a remnant of the ancient mother-kin or matriarchal stage. This practice found its way not only into the social life of the Kachāri of the same faith as the Pani, but also of the Khāsia, Jaintia and others. In

How
un-Vedik
Kālakeya
ideas and
ideals got
the upper-
hand.

103. "देवीदेव' कामरूपं विद्यतेऽयं न तद्वत्सम् ।

नयन विरला देवी कामरूपे गृहे गृहे ॥" (शालिनीयक)

The daughter's superiority over the son.

Kamakhya and Ashtarte are identical

these communities this supremacy of the mother accounts for the superiority of the daughter over the son, the former being granted the right of inheritance. From the ancient Assam Buranji also we find, "This being the territory of goddess Jayanti, the daughter's son and not her son's son can succeed to the throne."¹⁰⁴ The true born Koch or Pani-Koch has no King of his own now. If he had, this practice would have been still followed. Yet, the superiority of the mother will even now be found to be a predominant feature of the Pani-Koch society, as clearly established before. And to this was due the worship of the mother or Sakti, obtaining among the Panis. Needless to note that the ancient Pani or Kālakeya seat of Kāmarupa is recognised all over India as the first and principal centre of Sakti-worship. It has already been established that goddess Kāmākhyā representing divine energy and the Phœnician 'Ashtarte are wholly identical. On the origin of 'Ashtarte Prof. Paton says—"The Semites before their separation passed through a matriarchal stage of society. ... Descent was traced through the mother, and she was the head of the clan in peace and in war. In such a society the chief deity of the tribe must have been conceived as a counterpart of the human matriarch. Male divinities might exist and be known as *maternal uncle*, but they would not be called *father*, and would play so unimportant a part that they would survive only sporadically in later religion. This view is

104. Vide Assam Buranji, (Assam Govt. Col. Gauhati no. 78.) leaf 105A

confirmed by the fact that all those traits which are oldest and most permanent in the character of Ashtart-Ishtar are those which for other reasons we must predicate of the ancient Semitic mother."¹⁰⁵

The worship of Ādyā Sakti in the form of Kāmākhyā had its origin during Pāṇi supremacy in the very ancient days of India just in the same way as that of 'Ashtarte, as described above. The only point at issue is, Paton thinks, that Sakti-worship had its origin in the Semitic soil, while we are of opinion that it was in the Pāṇi-seat of Kāmarupa that this worship was first conceived and realised. The traditional migration of the Phoenicians from the shores of the Red or Eastern Sea will also support our view. It will be superfluous to point out that in the early days of Pāṇi supremacy in Kāmarupa or for the matter of that in Eastern India, the Pāṇis had to be engaged in a perpetual warfare with the Vedic Aryans. This the males had very little leisure to attend to household affairs. Nay even the production of the daily necessities of life had also to be left to the care of the females. In course of time this system naturally secured the supremacy of the woman in the Pāṇi community. It is the Pāṇis who have passed in the Purāṇas as Kālakeya Dānavas. It is needless to point out that all the families of the Kālakeyas as well as of the Bhaumas, Narakas and others of the same faith as the Kālakeyas, were founded by and named after the mother. (Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, chapter 68). This is also the history of the origin of the mo-

The origin
Sakti
worship.

Reverence
for the
woman—a
redominant
feature of
Pani-life.

Origin of
the joint
worship of
Siva and
Sakti.

ther-kin system. Even in modern Pani-Koch society the supremacy of the mother is recognised on all hands. Not only did the mother give birth but also supplied the necessities of life. This fact led the whole community to look upon the female sex as the very back-bone of the of the social fabric. This resulted in a deep devotion to the woman, symbolised by the generative organ which distinguishes her. And this devotion has ultimately materialised as the worship of Kāmākhyā representing the generative principle of creation. Except in the Pani-home of Kāmarupa or among Phoenicians devoted to the mother, the worship of the female generative organ has nowhere been so thoroughly developed or established. Although the worship of the Linga or the male generative organ had been in vogue in the Pani or Asura community from very early times, yet the importance of the woman in the Pani life of Kāmārūpa gradually eclipsed Linga worship and established Yoni-worship in its stead, symbolised by the goddess Kāmākhyā. Although Siva and Ba'al both representing Linga came to be recognised as the chief god in Kāmarupa during Mlechchha or Mech supremacy and in Asia-Minor during the ascendancy of the Assyrian respectively,¹⁰⁶ yet both in Kāmarupa and the Semitic community, just to avoid wounding the feelings of the people, the

106. The following lines from Lingārchana Tantra also breathe the same spirit,—

“शिवशक्तिं विना देवि नास्ति ज्ञानं मासके ।

शक्तिं विना महेशानि सर्वे व्यर्थे हि पावन्ति ॥” (१२५ पटल)

Knowledge can never be acquired even in a month without the joint worship of Siva and Sakti. Without Sakti-worship all religious endeavours come to smoke.

Yoni or Sakti worship could not be altogether neglected, rather had to be performed jointly with Siva-worship. Thus the joint worship of Siva and Sakti came to be established, no one ever questioning the necessity of worshipping the latter.¹⁰⁷ Although Brahmanic influence and Mlechchha contact, extending over ages, have both served to modify old customs and to diminish the influence of the fair sex to some extent, the Pani-Koch seem even now to keep to their old ways, as Col. Dalton tells us—

“The Pani Koch leave to the woman the cares of the property, who in return are exceedingly industrious, spin, weave, plant, saw, brew, in short, do every work which is not above their strength, such as felling trees and the like. When a woman dies, the family's property is divided amongst his daughters ; and when a man marries, he goes to live with his wife's mother, and obeys her orders and those of his wife. Marriages are usually settled by the mothers when the parties are young, but not without consulting their inclination. A girl not thus disposed of, when she grows up, selects a husband for himself, and, if he die, may take another. The husband or father appears to have nothing whatever to do with the arrangement. The expense of marriage is heaviest on the mother of the girl, who pays Rs 10, while the boy's mother only gives Rs 5. Girls who are frail can always procure their lover for a husband. Under such a regime, a man is not of course permitted to have more

107. This point has been more elaborately discussed in the chapter on Mlechchha supremacy.

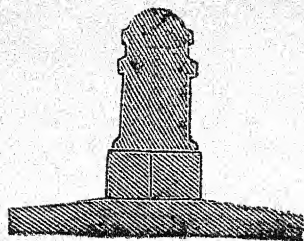
The Pani
Koch true
to his an-
cient proto-
type.

than one wife, nor are concubines tolerated. If a man is known to commit adultery, he is fined about Rs 60, and if his mother does not pay this, he is sold as a slave! Widows left with property generally manage to select young men as second husbands."¹⁰⁸

It is a matter of no small surprise that although thousands of years have rolled over their heads the Pani-Koch have maintained intact their fidelity to their ancient national manners and customs, faith and hopes. Even now they are as loyal and devoted to the Mother as before. Just as every Phœnician village had its tutelary deity to whom worship was duly and regularly offered, every Pani Koch hamlet also has even now its presiding god and goddess called Buḍā Buḍī (i. e. Siva and Sakti) like Ba'al and 'Ashtarte to whom worship was duly made. While under Brahmanic influence and culture the richer and more educated classes have recently begun gradually to move away from the groove of old ways, the poorer and the illiterate people with the womanfolk are still true to the old faith and ways of life.

Instances of
inter-mar-
riage between
the Panis
and the
Aryans.

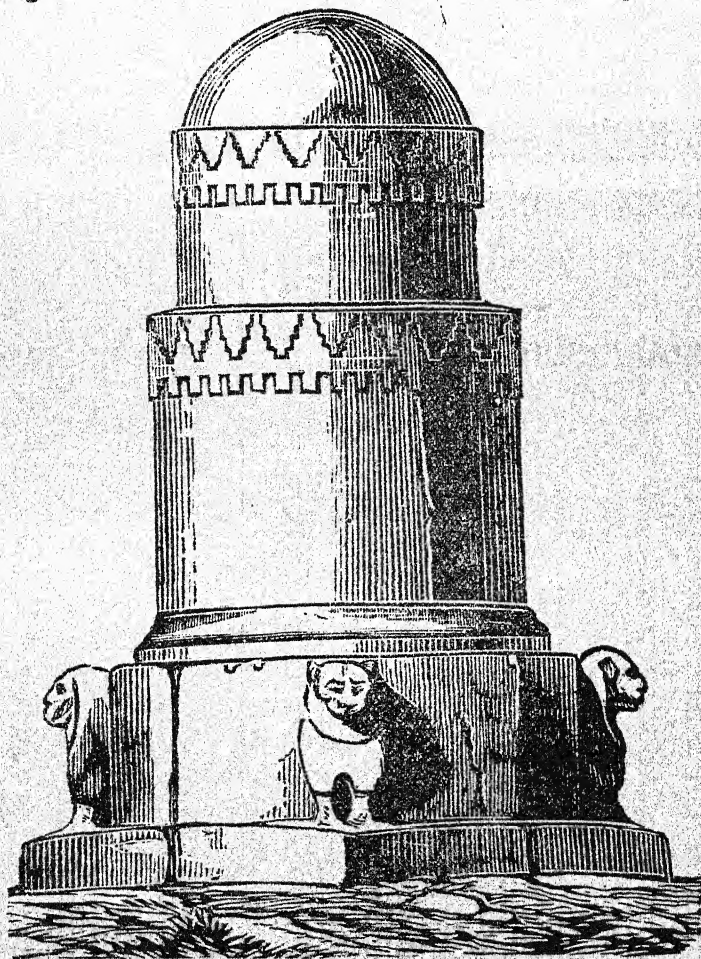
Although the authors of the Purāṇas did not scruple to nick-name this highly cultured race as Dānava, Asura, and Rākshasa, yet in the ancient Purāṇas we find instances of inter-marriage having taken place between this people and the Aryans or other non-Aryans of a high social order. From the Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa we come to learn that Puloma, Maya, and Vṛishā parvā sprang from the same stock as Bhauma and Naraka Dānava. Puloma's daughter Sachī was



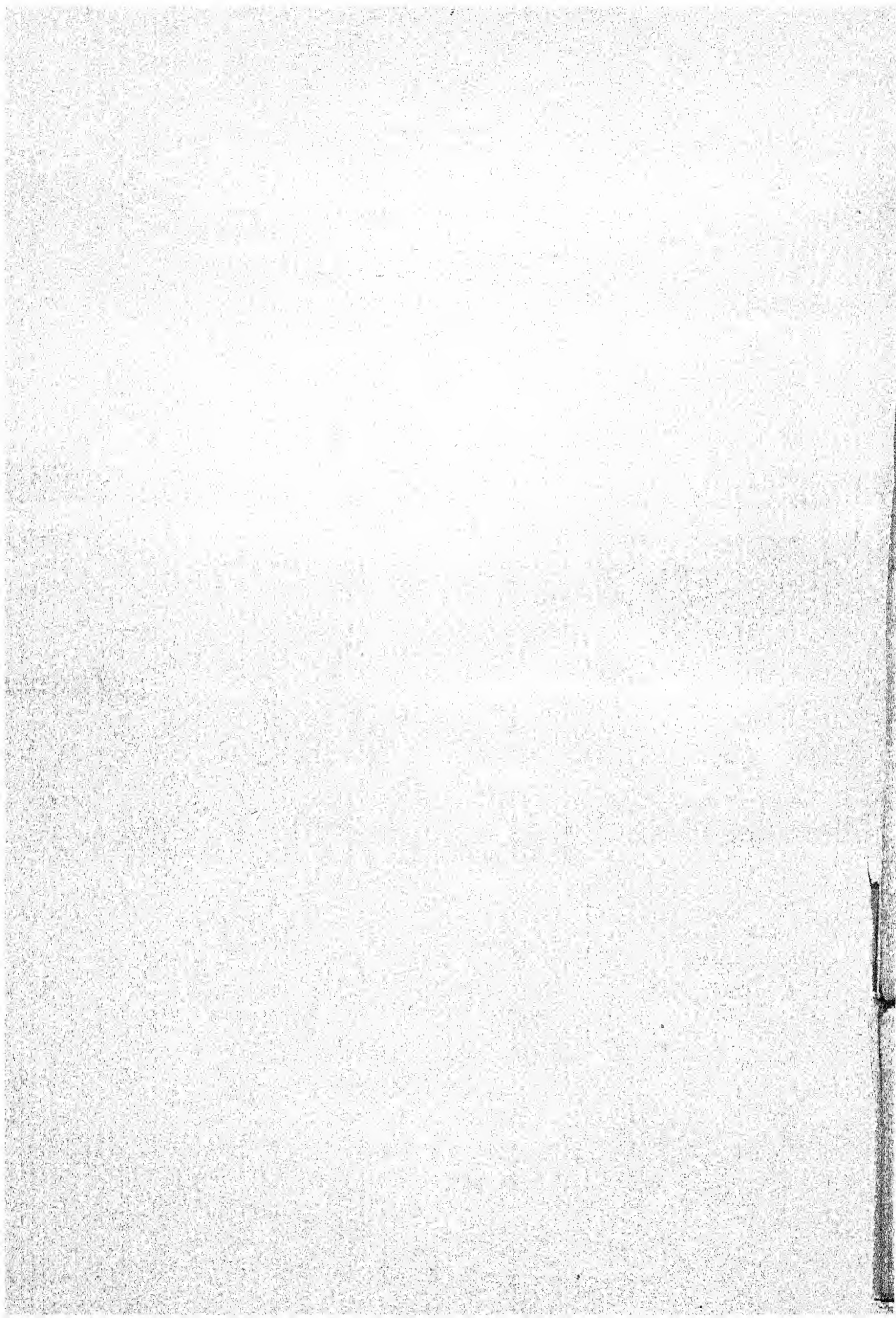
Burā Burī (Siva-Sakti) - Miniature form
of 'Baal & 'Astarte [See Fig. 2.]

Fig. 2.

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Ancient Sepulchral Monument at Amrit, Phœnicia.



the mother of Jayanta by Indra king of gods. Kuru the founder of the Kuru-Pāṇḍava family was the son of Sarmishthā daughter of Vṛishaparvā, and Dushmanta had for his mother Upadānavi daughter of Maya. Mārīcha took to wife both Pulomā and Kālakā, referred to above. From this Kālakā sprang the Kālakeyas. (Chap. 68.) And it was these Kālakeyas who subsequently came to be known as the Nivāta-Kavachas of Hiranyapura. The Rāmāyana tells us that Rāvana of Lankā married his only sister Sūrpānakhā to a very powerful Kālakeya or Pami prince of Hiranyapura. That a person of Rāvana's powers, greatness and influence could think of such an alliance is a clear proof that the Pami prince was no ordinary man and also that his race was not to be despised. While fighting the Nivāta-Kavachas Rāvana himself, through mistake, killed his own brother-in-law. In Padmapurāṇa we find mention made of a very powerful Kālakeya named Vātāpi. Agastya could not spread Aryan culture and civilisation over the Dekkan till he had managed to kill this Kālakeya chief. In Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, however, another Vātāpi, along with two other chiefs Bhauma and Naraka, all belonging to the Saimhikeya family, and recognised as very cruel haters of Brāhmanas and formidable foes of Devas, is said to have been killed by Parasurāma, son of Jamadagni (Chap. 68. 19-21). It may not even be unreasonable to suppose that the whole line of the first owner of the name came in course of time to be named after him. The "Vātāpipuri" of ancient rock-inscriptions changed in modern times into Vādāmi, points to the

The pre-eminence of the Kālakeyas in ancient times

place where the Vātāpis ruled in the Dekkan. Like them the Bhaumas and the Narakas also were ruling houses, reigning over Kāmarupa or Prāgjyotisha in Eastern India. From this association with them, these regions came also to be known as Bhauma or Nāraka territories. Although belonging to two different lines, the Bhaumas and the Narakas came to be recognised, in subsequent ages when history was being quickly forgotten, as one and the same people. It was after these two lines had been identified, that the story was circulated of the death of Bhauma-Naraka at the hands of Krishna. The story of the death of Bhauma and Naraka by Parasurāma was however in circulation long before this—when these two families had not yet been passed as one. In *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa* the Bhauma is found to have been called also by the name of Manda (69.184). And the 'Mandeha' of the *Rāmāyana* is no other than this Manda. In recent times, however, the Manda or Mandeha is again found to have passed into the Koch-mandāi.*

Even down to this day the story is current in Assam of the oppression of the Kshatriya ancestors of the Koch at the hands of Parasurāma. From *Kālikāpurāṇa* also we come to know that out of dread for Parasurāma the Kshatriya Princes of the age disguised themselves as Mlechchhas speaking the Aryan and the Mlechchha tongue.

It may now be safely asserted that the Koch is descended from the Pazi, although

* Vide, p. 48.

he has managed through centuries of social, political and religious disturbances and persecutions to forget himself—the history of his descent and his former greatness and glory. Besides, destructive agencies have all along been at work against him. Brāhmana authors of the Purānas have spared no pains to represent his ancestors as Daityas, Dānavas or Rākshasas. Systematic attempts have also been made for centuries to keep him in a state of perfect segregation, away from the Aryan community. And no one can tell how high waves of oppression and repression have rolled over his head. What a terrible downfall has overtaken the race which, even several thousand years back, attracted the admiration of the whole western world by holding before it a brilliant torch of culture and civilization! What a pity that descendants of such a race should now be found steeped in ignorance, superstition, illiteracy and barbarism ! The Koch furnishes an object-lesson of what vicissitudes of fortune can do to a nation however great and powerful once.

The present
degradation
of the Koch—
in contrast
to their past
greatness

3 The Vedic Aryan Influence

A number of
shrines sprung
up with
Aryan immi-
gration in the
north-east

At the very outset it has been described, on the authority of the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, how in this land of no sacrifices the influence of the Vedic Aryans was established by eclipsing the glories of the *Panīs*. After that various Aryan communities gradually found their way and settled here, in consequence of which there sprung into existence in course of time a number of shrines and holy places. The *Rāmāyana* tells us that in the pre-historic age king *Amūrtarajā*, elder brother of *Kusanābha*, grand-father of *Visvāmitra* and son of *Kusa*, founded the city of *Prāgjyotisha* here.¹ We are also told that the great seer *Visvāmitra* practised his religious austerities upon the banks of the *Kausikī*, flowing through the Himalayan regions to the north-west of this region². In the age of the *Mahābhārata*, we find the *Karatoyā*, like *Prabhāsa*, *Pushkara*, *Mānasa*, *Naimisha* and other places of Hindu pilgrimage ranked among the greatest shrines.³ It is in the *Mahābhārata* that we find mention made for the first time of the *Lauhitya* shrine established by *Parasurāma*.⁴ Now in the *Kālikāpurāṇa* as well as in the *Yoginītantra* it is the *Brahmaputra* which has been identified with the above shrine of *Lauhitya*. Even to-day a hot spring bearing

1. “तथासूरीराजा वीरश्चक्रे प्राग्ज्योतिषं पुरं ।”

Here king *Amūrtarajas*, a great warrior, founded the city of *Prāgjyotisha*. The *Rāmāyana* (ed *Gorresio*) *Adi*, Chap. 32.

2. The *Rāmāyana*, *Ayodhyā*, Chap. 34.

3. “प्रभासं मानसं तीर्थं पुष्कराणि महत्सरः ।

पुण्यं च नैमिषं तीर्थं बाहुदं करतोयिनीम् ॥”

The *Mahābhārata*, *Anusāsana*,

4. *Mahābhārata*, *Anusāsana*.

the names of Brahmakunḍa and Parasurāma-kunḍa is to be found in the semi-independent state of Khamti in the Eastern frontier regions of Assam, 52 miles to the east of Sadiā. According to the Kālikāpurāṇa Parasurāma rent a hill and caused the Lauhitya to flow out from it, after he had filled it with waters from the Brahmakunḍa. The Lauhitya flowed westward from here under the name of Brahmaputra inundating the territory of Kāmarūpa and thus hiding all the ancient shrines of the place.⁵ Local tradition has it, also confirmed by a work called Brahma-vaivarta-purāṇa, written slightly over two hundred years back in the Assamese tongue by Balarāma Dvija that Parasurāma, son of Jamadagni, killed his own mother with an axe under the orders of his father. The axe remained glued to his hand; nor did it drop off even after he had been to all the holy shrines by way of penance. At length, travelling eastward he reached the holy spring of Brahmakunḍa. After he had plunged in it with the inexorable axe, lo and behold! it dropped off. Surprised beyond measure, Parasurāma determined to turn the Brahmakunḍa into a shrine. Accordingly he rent the hill which is the source of the Brahmaputra and caused the holy river to flow out to this place. Now, with a view to increasing the sanctity of the shrine, he brought over Brāhmanas of seven different families from Kanauja, made gift to them of the whole northern bank of the Brahmaputra and went away. On his return, however,

5. Kālika-purāṇa, Chap. 81.

he found that all those Brāhmanas had left the place. He cursed them and himself went away.⁶ In the *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa*, we find Parasurāma killed Bhauma and Naraka of this eastern region and established Brāhmanic supremacy.⁷ According to tradition, the descendants of those seven families of Brāhmanas who were cursed by Parasurāma to fall down from their high status, degenerated three families of the Mismi, two of the Abor, one each of the Dasā and the Miri. Now the Mismis are divided into three different families,—Diju Mismi, Digāru Mismi and Midhi or Chulikaṭā Mismi.* Of these, descendants of the first family are even now found to levy religious fees from the pilgrims to the Parasurāma-kunḍa or Brahmakunḍa. The Mismis say that no other Brāhmanas are entitled to accept these fees and they are enjoying this privilege from time immemorial.⁸

The account
of the origin
of the Diyu
Mismi

6. Vide Mss of *Brahmavaivarta-purāṇa* of Assam Govt. Col. Auniati No 1. Verses 2306—2311.

7. Vide *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa*, Chap. 68.

* Now they are divided into 4 groups viz :—Chulikata, Digaru, Miju and Babejia. (Vide Gait's Assam, p. 318)

8. My friend Pandit Padmanāth Vidyavinoda M.A. of Cotton College, Gauhati, has seen the Mismis with his own eyes, and this is what he says of them. The languages of the Diyu and the Digāru Mismis are strikingly similar in many respects. It is said that the lord Parasurāma established some Brāhmana families in the regions. Having lost touch with their own kith and kin they gradually forgot their own rites and observances, adopting those of the hill-tribes in their neighbourhood. In this way they came in course of time to be known as Mismis. It seems that Diyu Mismis were originally Dvija Misras and the Digarus Dvijāvaras. Vide Padmanāth Bhattācharya's *Travels in Parasuramkunda & Vadarikasrama* in Bengali.

In his *Ethnology of Bengal*, Col. Dalton writes as to the physical appearance of the Mismis,—“The Mismis are a short sturdy race of fair complexion for Asiatic, well-knit figures and active as monkeys, they vary much in feature, generally exhibiting a rather softened face of the Mongolian type, but sometimes with regular, almost Aryan features, the nose higher and nostrils larger than is seen in the Indo-Chinese races. They have themselves a legend to account for this. I forget the particulars, but I know it connects them in some way with Hindu pilgrims to the Brahmakund.”⁹

The Aryan features of some of the Diju Mismis

Indeed, considering their nature and appearance, manners and customs, rites and ceremonies as well as their national characteristics it seems clear that the Diju Mismis must have come down from the Vedic Aryans. Like the Vedic Brāhmanas they also look down upon agricultural pursuits, and like the Vis of the *Rigveda-samhitā* they also travel from place to place with articles of trade. Like both the Aryans and the Panis of the Vedic age they also look upon the cow as their chief wealth. Every year they are found to descend on the plains of Assam to buy pair of cows. The hill-ox (*Bos frontalis*) or Mithun is the most favourite thing with them. The number of wives as well as the amount of wealth is determined by the number of Mithuns one may have. Among the Aryans the gift of cow is a highly meritorious act. The Mismis also give away cows to the

The Diju Mismis are descendants of the Vedic Aryans

9. Dalton, *Ethnology of Bengal*, p. 18.

bride's party as dowry. On occasions of hospitality and other great occasions also the ox is slaughtered and eaten.

Their rites
and custom
support it

Even now like the Vedic Brāhmanas they are found to observe a period of 10 days for defilement caused whether by birth or death. After delivery, the mother with her child is confined in the lying-in-room for the same period. The very dress worn by the priests of this race, when offering worship or reciting some incantation, will be found to carry us back, however faintly, to the days of Aryan civilisation. They put on "a light fitting coat of coloured cotton, a small apron and a deer-skin as mantle."¹⁰ It is superfluous to state that the Vedic Aryans also, when conferring the sacred thread or performing sacrifices, used the deer-skin as their sacred thread.¹¹ Not only when officiating as priests but on many other occasions the Diju Mismis are found to put on sacred threads of deer-skin. Pilgrims who have been to Brahmakunḍa must have noticed this. In the face of these facts no conscientious scruples are felt in recognising the Mismis as descendants of the Aryans and more particularly the Diju Mismis as outcaste sons of Vedic Brāhmanas.

In the age of Dharma-sūtra, the thread of cotton was assigned to the Brāhmanas, that of hemp-fibres to the Kshatriyas and that of sheep-hair to the Vaisyas.¹² Previous to that the

10. Dalton, E. B. p. 16.

11. Vide Keith's Vedic Index, Vol II. p. 184.

12. "कार्पासमुपवीतं स्यात् विप्रश्चोर्द्ध्वतं विवर्णम् ।

श्यासुत्वमयं राज्ञः वैश्यस्याविकसौविकम् ॥" (मनु)



Diju Mishmi with sacred thread of deer-skin.

deer-skin served the purpose of the sacred thread with the Vedic Aryans generally. Hence it seems that the ancestors of the Mismis must have left their original home for the banks of the Lauhitya before this differentiation of the sacred thread was introduced. In describing the home and furniture of the Chulikaṭā or Midhi branch of the Mismis, Col. Dalton says—

Their sacred thread.

“Their houses were long and narrow, about 60 feet by 12. One side was a narrow passage, from end to end; the remainder was divided into small apartments in some of which were seats—a sign of civilisation, not often met with in Indian huts.”¹³

Their houses

The above compliment paid by a European ethnologist also speaks, however faintly, in favour of their past civilisation. As observed elsewhere the Diju and Digāru branches of these people are supposed by some to have been originally Dvijās and Dvijāvaras respectively. Similarly the Midhis may also be taken to have come down from Vedic ‘Medhis’ or ‘Grihamedhins.’

Origin of the names Diju, Digaru and Miri.

And it is also equally likely that the change of residence as well as the change in manners and customs has been chiefly responsible for changing the name of Medhi into Miri in some places. Again, if we take into consideration their physical and mental constitutions as well as their manners and customs we shall find that in spite of the difference that now exists among them, the Abors, the Daflās and the Miris must have originally sprung from the same common stock. Their languages also are not very different from one another. Those who have

Abors, Daflās, and Miris sprung from the same stock.

13. Dalton, E. B. pp. 19-21.

Their Aryan
features.

never acknowledged defeat or bowed to others are called Avaras or Abors. They are not also lacking in many of those special features which western anthropologists have assigned to peoples of the Aryan blood. With their bold noses, broad foreheads and bright white complexion, how beautiful they look—both males and females ! Although large and wide, and not piggish like those of the peoples of the Mongolian stock, their eyes seem generally to be of the medium size on account of the state of intoxication they are almost always in by drinking the home-made beverage.¹⁴

Their form
of worship
resembling
that of
Vedic
Aryans.

Although worshippers of many gods and demi-gods, on close analytical examination their faith will be found to resolve itself into belief in one supreme God whom they call *Tagan-archi* or *Tigmārchī* (God of light). This *Tigmārchī* is no other than the *Mahā-sakti* (Supreme Power). To propitiate her, when they fall on evil days, the *Devadhāis* of these people offer the following hymn—

“बाबु'ए एहिलो केदांए निगिंमो तामेङ्गे दागदिळा”

ābunge ehilo kedānge nirgimo Tāmenge dāgdilā.

Oh God of Earth, oh God of heaven, Oh God of light, come here and receive our homage.

Those who have listened to the recitation of this hymn as well as of any Vedic one will at

14. Without careful inquiry Col. Dalton has set these people down as belonging to the Mongolian stock. Babu Kamalākānta Bhattacharya the famous elephant-catcher of Dhubri in Assam, however, having passed over 20 years of his life in the midst of these hill-people and carefully studied their physical and mental constitution, has declared them to be of the Aryan blood.

once find that the tone and pronunciation are identical in both. Not that alone. Hymns of this kind will also be found to abound in the Rigveda. It has besides to be noted that their worship or invocation consists only in offering hymns, no flower and leaf being used, just as the Vedic Aryans did. Thus from this also it may be safely conjectured that this hill-tribe has sprung from those members of the Aryan family who had come over to and settled in this part of the country in the Vedic age when the juice of the Soma was still the favourite drink and before Paurānikism and Tāntrikism succeeded the Vedic form of worship. However it is for the Ethnologist and the Philologist and not for an humble writer of social history like myself, to look for those natural, physical or political causes which have brought about such miraculous changes in the language and circumstances of this ancient people.

Of the Abor, the Daflā and Miri, the first and the last do not touch beef. The Abors are even averse to drinking milk supposing it to be but the blood of the cow. They also look down upon all those as 'untouchable' who eat beef. Owing to this difference in diet, these three classes, inspite of one common origin, have come to be recognised as different races belonging to different communities. The languages of the Mismis and kindred races have also been considerably influenced by the Mlechchha tongue and ways of thought owing to their close contact with the latter extending over thousands of years. In the history of Kāmarupa the rise of the Mlechchhas or Asuras are found to have taken place even during the ascendancy of these Aryans.

Difference
of diet and
contact
with
Mlechchhas.

4. The Lohitic and the Mongolian Influence.

Among the hill-tribes with which the Vedic Aryans came in contact in Eastern India and the Himalayan region, the Kirātas are the most prominent. The Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda contain the first references to them, the former speaking of them as 'living in caves'¹ and in the latter occurring the following²—"The little girl of the Kirātas, she the little one, with golden shovels, upon the ridges of the mountains, that which conquers disease."³

The Kirātas
cave-dwell-
ing and
insulate,

Then in the Rāmāyana we have—"The Kirātas are of conical heads, and golden complexion and are fair-looking." "Those living in islands, however, are fierce, and are tigers in human form."⁴

The Mahābhārata also is not silent about them. Among the soldiers of Bhagadatta, one section of the Kirātas is said to be adorned with gold ornaments⁴ and of the other it is said that they were natives of the marshy sandbanks.⁵

1. "गुहासुः किरातं सानुथो जगत् पर्वतैः किंपुरुषम्" ।
(White Yajurveda, xxx, 16.)

2. "कैरातिका कुमरिका सता खनति भेषजम् ।
हिरण्यमीभिरद्रिभिर्ग्रीवासुपसानुषु ॥"
(Atharva, x, 4, 14)

* W. D. Whitney's Atharvaveda, p. 577.

3. "किरातास्त्रीचक्षुडाय हेमाभाः प्रियदर्शनाः । २७
अस्तर्जलचरा वीरा नरव्याघ्रा इति श्रुतः ॥ २८ "

The Rāmāyana, Kishkindhyā, Chap. 40

4. Mahābhārata, Udyoga-parva, Chap. 18.

5. Mahābhārata, Karzāparva, Chap. 5.

In all the Purānas again the territory of the Kirātas has been set down as the eastern boundary of India.

Now, from the Vedas, the Rāmāyana as well as the Māhābhārata we get a rough idea that there were two classes of Kirātas, one of these lived in mountain-caves and were charming in appearance. They were of golden complexion and adorned their bodies with gold ornaments; while the other lived in marshy sandbanks or in islands and were aquatic in character. They lived upon raw fish and were fierce by nature. They have been described as "man-tiger". Most probably both these classes originally sprung from the same common stock, difference in manners and customs and modes of living due to different circumstances and places of residence ultimately bringing about this difference in appearance and character.

They spread over the whole Eastern frontier of India, *i. e.* Assam, Chittagong and the hill-tracts of Tipperah as well as the shallows of the adjacent Lohita Sea and the marshy lands about or the small islands in the river Lauhitya. That is to say, they lived both on land and water. Till the age of the Atharvaveda or even of the Rāmāyana they were ignorant of the use of iron and used gold very largely. Needless to say that during this age gold was available in abundance in their territories.

"The gods bought the king Soma in the eastern direction. Thence he is (generally) bought in the eastern direction."⁶ (Haug.)

6. "प्राच्यां वै दिशि देवाः सोमं राजानमश्वीनन् दक्षात् प्राच्यां दिशि दिशि प्रौद्यते ।" (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, I. 3. 7.)

The cave-dwelling Kirātas were the growers of Soma.

From this description in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa the great Vedic scholar Pandit Satyavrata Sāmāsrāmī has been led to conclude that it was from the Kirāta towns of Eastern India that the Aryans bought their Soma-plant.⁷ The sale of Soma was a forbidden thing for the Aryans and never would they sell it.⁸ Kirātas from Eastern regions sold Soma in the markets of Aryan India. In the Vedic age this plant had far more customers than tea commands in modern India. And it may be reasonably conjectured that like the tea-plant, the soma-creeper also had a spontaneous growth in the hilly tracts of Assam.⁹

According to the Brāhmaṇa part of the Vedas it was from the Yakshas or Gandharvas that

7. Vide Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Asiatic Society's edition, Vol. IV, intro.

8. Vide Manu iii. 180. Yājñavalkya, i. 223.

9. Some think, it was the tea which, in olden times mixed with some intoxicating drug, was used under the name of Soma. Again some European scholars think, and their view is accepted by a larger number of people, that in a place named Kerman in Persia, there grows a particular kind of creeper (*Sarcostema* or *Periplooa aphylla*), which was called Hoama in the Avesta of the Persians and Soma in the Vedas, (Vide Eggeling's *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, pt II. Intro, XLV) while the sacrificers of the Deccan are found to regard another creeper (*Asclepias acida*) as Soma. In these circumstances no one can say positively which, and if any one of these, is the real thing. In *Susruta* the Soma creeper is said to have sixteen varieties and the leaves of some of which were regulated in size according to *tithis* (lunar days). People in intimate touch with tea plantation, are also well aware that the tea in certain places also betrays this peculiarity in modern times. Hence it may not be wide of the truth to suppose that the tea represents one or other of those sixteen varieties of the Soma.

Soma was bought. In the East of Nepal this race still goes by the name of Kirāta¹⁰ and after its name, a part of Nepal is still called 'Kirānti'.¹¹ Not long ago this people inhabited also Rangpur, Dinajpur and the neighbourhood.¹² In Nepal they are even now found to be divided into three classes—the Yākhā, the Limbu and the Yambu or Rākhā. It may be superfluous to observe that in the Eastern regions it was the Yākhās and the Rākhās who were known as Yakshas and Rakshas respectively. And probably it was these Yākhās or Yaksha Kirātas who were dealers in Soma in the Vedic age; and, following this old hereditary custom they are even now found to brew and deal in fermented and distilled liquors. Undoubtedly, they are descendants of the people who, in the Vedas and in the Rāmāyana, were called cave-dwelling Kirātas, and the "man-tiger" Kirātas living in islands or marshy sand-banks and were known as Rakshas or Rākshasas.

They were
the yakshas.

The insular
Kirātas
were the
Rakshas.

In the story related in the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata (Chap. 147) regarding the encounter between Arjuna and Siva in the guise of a Kirāta, we do indeed come across Kirātas, fond of hunting, in the far-off northern frontier regions of the Himālayas; hence from what we are told of them in the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata as well as in all the Purāṇas we may safely take them as the aborigines of Trans-Himālayas as well as of the country of Lauhitya in Eastern India or of the marshy

10. Dr. Oldfield's Nipal, Vol. I. p. 111.

11. Dr. Oldfield's Nipal, Vol. I. p. 53.

12. Dalton's Ethnology of Bengal, p. 103.

lands on the shores of the ancient Red Sea. For this reason it would be well to regard this people as belonging to the Lohitic as well as Mongolian race.

The Koch,
Mech,
Kachāri,
Rabhā and
Dhimāl are
different
races.

According to some modern western ethnologists, the Koch, the Mech, the Kachāri, the Rabhā, and the Dhimāl are all one and the same people having sprung from one common stock. We do, however regard the Koch, the Mech, the Kachari and the Dhimāl as quite different peoples. The Kochas or the *Pani* Kochas have already been spoken of. It will seem superfluous to add after that that the Kachāris are the intermixture of the Utkacha and the Kirātas.

Gāros and
Kachāris.

There are some also who are disposed to regard the Gāro and the Kachāri as identical in blood. These also can not be the same people. In ancient times Gāros were known as Gāruḍas. The white palace of Gāruḍa situated on a mountain on the shores of the Lohitasāgara, refers very probably to the residence of these Gāruḍas on Gāro hills¹³. In the Mahābhārata Garuḍa is described as sworn enemy to the snake and is given the epithet of "Kirātāsin" (devourer of Kirātas). As desired by his mother, Garuḍa went to the sea-shore and devoured a large number of Kirātas. Hence the epithet. It is as well a known fact that in ancient times Gāros and Kirātas were on terms of the deadliest enmity, and whenever opportunity occurred, the former would kill and eat the flesh of the latter. Of course in modern times the Gāros do not kill and devour men, but he is still found to be a deadly enemy of the snakes. Whenever they find a snake, they catch

13. Rāmāyana, Kishkindhyā, Chap. 40, Sloka 41.

it and cook its flesh into meat. It is said in the Bhabishya and Sāmba Purānas that Garuḍa brought the Maga or Scythian Brāhmins to India. It is needless to mention that this story is used figuratively in the Purānas. The Gāros even in the present day carry persons on the two wings made of bamboo fixed on their back. It is probable that these were the people who carried the Magii on their wings from the remote Central Asia into this country. Hence the story that the Scythian Brahmins came into India on the wings of Garuḍa.

It has been previously mentioned, that the Kirātas had, at one time, occupied the whole of Assam, but subsequently losing hold over the country, before the powerful Naraka, they withdrew themselves to the coast of the Eastern Sea. The Utkachas, the dwellers of the hills, being also dispossessed of all, left the borders of Assam and blended themselves with the Kirātas. The descendants of this mixed people are known at the present time as the Kachāris.

Kirātas

Ghaṭaka was the name by which the ancient ruling family of the Kirātas was known; after their intermingling with the Utkachas the title was perhaps changed into Ghaṭotkacha. At the time of the Rājastīya sacrifice of the Mahābhārata when Bhīma, the second Pāṇḍava brother, came, on the mission of universal conquest to the east, he defeated the Kirātas and Utkachas and placed his son on their throne under the guardianship of his mother Hiḍimbā. He is Ghaṭotkacha I, the king of the Kirātas and Utkachas. It has been said before that formerly the Koch dynasty belonged to the system of mother-kin and that the Panikochas even now

Ghaṭotkacha

Haiḍimba

adhere to the system of a matriarchal society. Their kinsmen the Utkachas showed their affinity with the Panikochas by calling the dynasty founded by Ghaṭotkacha as Haiḍimba or the line of Hiḍimbā and giving the same name to the country which they inhabited. This prince became so much distinguished for valour that Bhagadatta the king of Prāgjyotisha bestowed the hands of his adopted daughter on him, this being the first instance of the intermarriage between the Kachāri and Mech tribes. From this union sprang the great hero Barbarika. From Mahābhārata we learn how in the great war of Kurukshetra Bhagadatta took the side of the Kauravas, whereas his son-in-law that of the Paṇḍavas losing his life in their cause, at the hands of Karna.

Conferring
of Aryanhood
on Ghaṭot-
kacha

From the Kumārikākhaṇḍa of Skandapurāṇa, we learn that Yudhisṭhira conferred on Ghaṭotkacha the rulership of Haiḍimba-Vana. The latter informed Yudhisṭhira that on the death of his maternal uncle, Hiḍimba, his mother, had conducted the government upholding the gods and the Brāhmanas, but she having now resigned the cares of administration to him was practising severe penances unheard of in her society, whereupon Yudhisṭhira hailed him, though low-born, as a *kulīna* i. e. equal in rank to the highborn, in recognition of the steadfast penances of his (Yudhisṭhira's) dear sister-in-law*. From this it may be inferred that though

* “अहो देवी सुदुस्तरं कुरुते मे प्रिया वधूः ।
या मातृश्रियमुत्तङ्ग्य तप एव समाश्रिताः ॥
दुष्कुलीनापि वा भक्ताः तपतेऽत्यन्तभक्तिमत् ।
कुलीनमेव तन्मन्ये समेदं मतमुत्तमम् ॥” (कुमारिकाखण्ड)

the mother of Ghaṭotkacha was of non-Aryan origin and though he himself had inherited the rights which in a matriarchal society were his, yet he was elevated to the rank of an Aryan. The account of the devotion, conduct and penances of his favourite son Barbarika fills many pages of the *Kumārika-khaṇḍa* of *Skandapurāṇa*, but we notice a special feature in his mode of worship which is certainly not Aryan. It has been seen that the Kochas worshipped the symbol of sex. Barbarika was a votary of the phallic god and of the goddess who was the symbolised form of procreative power (Bhaga).†

Barbarika
worshipped
symbol of
sex.

In modern times the Gāros and the Kachāris are found to have intermingled in some places, yet the true-born Gāro is quite different from the Kachāri. It was in the dim past that the former came over to India from Trans-Himalayan regions, while the Kachāris are aborigines of this country. Hence while the Gāro can safely be consigned to the Mongolian stock, the Kachāri

Gāros
and
Kachāris

† “*स्वात्वाभ्यर्च्यैव लिङ्गानि देव्यैवाचरेत् प्रथक् ।*

कृत्वा ज्ञानमुपोष्यैव वर्वरीकोऽनिकोऽभवत् ॥

प्रथमायां ततो रात्रौ ययौ सिद्धाम्बिका पुरः ।

मण्डलीं तत्र कृत्वा च भगवत्पुत्रविधानम् ॥

अष्टदिग्भिः कौलकाश्च निखनौ च स स्तकात् ।

कृत्वा जिनधरो भूत्वा वर्वरीक सन्वितः ॥

शिखामावध्य दिग्बन्धं कृत्वा रमे ततो विधिः ।

मध्ये वै मण्डलस्यापि कृष्टे शुभे निमण्डले ॥

तमभ्यर्च्य च तत् खड्गं खादिरं सन्विते जितं ।

संस्थाप्य कौलमभितो वर्वरीकमथाब्रवीत् ॥”

(*कुमारिकाखण्ड, वर्वरीकोपाख्यान*)

can at the best be called Lohitic. The former is a beef-eater, while the latter is not.

The true type of the ancient Kirāta is to be found in the Kiranti of Nepal and also in a southern branch of this tribe generally known as Tippera or Tipra aborigines of the Hill Tipparah.¹⁷

5. The Dravidian influence.

From what has been said in the foregoing lines, it appears that Ghaṭotkacha was not a pure Utkacha. The matronymic portion of his name Ghaṭotkacha may be explained by the fact that among the Utkachas, the matriarchal system prevailed, while the remainder of the name suggests that he was the ruler of the Kirātas also. The Bāna dynasty, however, which was a contemporary of the Naraka, could boast of true Kocha or Utkacha blood. All the Purāṇas agree in the account of Bali, the father of Bāna, losing his power through the stratagem of Vāmana and taking refuge in Pātāla. It has been previously mentioned that the south of Sindh was the region of Rasātala inhabited by a race of Dānavas called the Kālakeyas. To the Greek writers who were contemporary of Alexander, a particular locality in the Southern Sindh was known as Patalene. It is therefore quite probable that Bali, the lord of the Daityas and the Dānavas, spent the remaining years of his life in this region. His kinsmen like the Panikochas were driven far east before the rising power of the Aryans. We have evidence in the

Pātāla

Bali and
Bāna

17. Dalton's Ethnology of Bengal, p. 109.

tradition current in Sindh and Cutch, of long years of rule over these regions of Naraka and Bāna and of the fact that there was racial kinship and social connection in remote times, between the far east and the south-west of India. From Harivaṁśa and the Purāṇa we learn that the thousand-armed Bāna having brought the whole of the neighbouring country to his subjection founded his capital at *Sonitapura*. He is variously known as Daitya, Dānava or Asura. The descendant of the Somma dynasty of Sindh trace their ancestry from Bāna. Many of the Purāṇas give the episode of the love of Ushā, his daughter, for Aniruddha the grandson of Krishna. The former being enamoured of the beauty of the latter had him brought secretly into the inner apartments of Bāna's palace where the ladies resided. After a time this came to the ears of Bāna who forthwith seized Aniruddha and threw him into prison. On an anxious enquiry about his absent son, Krishna came to know that the prince was pining away in the prison of Bāna in Sonitapur. He waged a long war with him and rescued his grandson Aniruddha along with his bride Ushā.

Ushā and
Aniruddha.

The Assamese identify the ancient Sonitapur with the modern Tejpur, where the celebrated war between Krishna and Bāna took place. On the other hand such a statement in the dictionary called *Trikaṇḍa-Sesha* as “देवैकोटं नाणपुरं शोषिताह्वयेन च” would seem to point to Deokot in Dinajpur as having been the site of the ancient Sonitapura.

Sonitapur
Capital of
Bāna.

Where was then the ancient Sonitapura situated? It is clear that up to the invasion of Alexander a locality in the south of Sindh

was called Pātāla. The contiguity of the possessions of both Bāna and Krishna may be well established from the accounts of the love of Ushā and Aniruddha in Harivaṃsa and other Purāṇas. It is therefore, more reasonable to locate Sonitapura somewhere in Sindh than in Assam. The historical traditions in Sindh and Cutch which say that the Bāna and Naraka dynasties ruled for a long period over their countries may be cited in support of this view.

Position of
Sonitapur.

It has already been mentioned that the ancestors of Panikochas lived in Sindh in very ancient times and that the Kālakeyas the old inhabitants of this country were racially related to the Kavachas or the Utkachas. After being worsted at the hands of the Yādavas Bāna came to the far East. The Assam Buruṅji and some other Assamese books give us more or less detailed accounts of Bāna's life. In Assam Buruṅji Bāna is described as the friend of Naraka, whom he converted into a hater of the Aryans. He also founded a capital in Assam which he called Sonitapura after the name of his former capital in the west.

Somar

From the Sind Gazetteer it is learnt that a powerful race called the Somar or Somra ruled over the country for a very long time. They were not properly Hindus; they were regarded by some as Buddhists, by some as Jainas, and by others as an idolatrous people. When Muhammad-ibn Kasim conquered Sindh they embraced the faith of Islam. Even as late as the 11th century A. D. when they had fallen from their former greatness some of the leaders of this race were in possession of considerable

portion of Sindh as feudatory chiefs.¹ They bear some ethnic resemblance to the Sumerians previously described. Whether the Chaldean Sumers had any racial affinity with the Sindh Sumārs may be a subject of interesting historical enquiry.

In the Yoginī-Tantra, however, the country over which the Bāna dynasty ruled in Assam is known as Saumāra. It is not improbable that a branch of the Sumārs might have migrated with the Bānas into Assam imparting their name to the country. From Harivaṁsa it is ascertained that Bāna the father of Ushā was contemporary of Krishna. Yoginī-Tantra places the rise of Saumāras in Assam shortly after the wars of Kurukshetra. It was through Bāna and Saumāra dynasty that the phallic worship was strongly established in Assam.² But the Sex-god was somewhat different in form from that in the ordinary worship.

Saumāras

It may be generally known that a particular piece of stone called Bāna-līṅga is the object of special devotion in many Hindu households. The reason for which it is called Bāna-līṅga is

Bāna līṅga

1. Gazetteer of the Province of Sind, (1876), by A. W. Hughes, p. 28.

2. According to the Yoginī-Tantra, the rise of the Royal dynasty of Saumāra or Ahom in Assam took place 128th generation from Arindama. The story of the creation as told in Ahom traditions is related by Sir A. Gait (Vide Gait's History of Assam, p. 68.) A translation of a slightly different version of this cosmogony is given by Dr. Grierson in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society for April, 1904. Dr. Grierson points out that the opening portion recalls the cosmogony described the Babylonian Tablets.

given in the following passage from the *Sūta-Samhitā*,—

“The king *Bāna* was a special favourite of the great *Mahādeva*. He performed his worship by installing every day with his own hands a *Siva-linga*. After he had worshipped *Siva* for a hundred years in this manner, the great god being highly pleased conferred on him a boon, speaking thus to him, “I give you fourteen crores of *Liṅgas* which are especially endowed. They are to be found in the *Narmadā* and other sacred streams. They will confer faith and salvation on their devotees. They will bear your name and be worshipped as such.”³

Hemādri, the author of *Chaturvarga-chintāmaṇi* writes thus—

“These *liṅgas* will ceaselessly roll by themselves in the stream of the river *Narmadā*. In an ancient time, *Bāna* absorbed in contemplation

3. “वाणासुरः पुरा भद्रे ! शिवस्वातीव-वत्सलः ।...

दिने दिने स्वयं दत्त्वा लिङ्गं स्थाप्य प्रपूजयेत् ॥

एवं वर्षं शतं देवि ! दिव्यमानेन पूजयेत् ।

तदा तद्गतिमुत्तमः प्रत्यक्षः शङ्करो भवेत् ॥

शङ्कर उवाच ।

तुष्टोऽहं तव हे वाण ! वरं ब्रुहि किमिच्छसि ।

शङ्करस्य वचः श्रुत्वा वाणो वचनमब्रवीत् ॥...

तस्मात्त्वं यदि मे तुष्टो लिङ्गं देहि सुलक्षणम् ॥...

इत्येवं वचनं तस्य शिवः परमकारणम् ।

श्रुत्वा कैलासमूर्ध्नां शङ्करेण विनिश्चिताः ॥

लिङ्गानां कोटिर्ब्रह्म तया चैव चतुर्हः ।...

अथोन्मैवं सुसंपूर्णं वाणस्य च समर्पितम् ।...

वाणाचार्यं कृतं लिङ्गं वाणलिङ्गमतः अतम् ॥” (सुतसंहिता)

invoked Mahādeva who in compliance with his prayer is now residing on the mountain in the shape of a līṅga. It is for this reason that the Līṅgas are known as Bāna-līṅgas. The same benefit that would accrue to a devotee by worshipping a crore of līṅgas would be obtained by him by worshipping only one Bāna-līṅga. These Bāna-līṅgas are to be placed on altars made either of copper or sphaṭika, or gold, silver, or stone, and then worshipped. Those who daily worship Bāna-līṅga found on the banks of the river Narmadā get salvation within their grasp.”³

The Paurāṇic extract contains the allusion of the fact that Bāna introduced in the hilly country, washed by the river Narmadā, the worship of a particular form of līṅga which bears his name. It superseded the use of the huge-sized līṅga in the phallic worship and soon spread everywhere among the non-Aryan inhabitants and at last the Aryans too began to

3. 'खद्यं स'खवते लिङ्ग' गिरितो नर्मदाजले ।
 पुरा वाणसुरेणाहं प्रार्थितो नर्मदातटे ।
 आविरासं गिरौ तव लिङ्गरूपो महेश्वरः ।
 वाणलिङ्गमिति श्रुत्वा तमतीर्थं जगतीवले ॥
 अन्धेषां कोटिलिङ्गानां पूजने यत्फलं लभेत् ।
 तत्फलं लभते मर्त्यो वाणलिङ्गैकपूजनात् ।...
 ताम्बी वा स्फाटिकौ स्वार्णौ पाषाणौ राजतौ तथा ।
 वेदिका च प्रकर्त्तव्या तव संस्थाया पूजयेत् ॥—
 प्रत्यहं योऽर्चयन्निङ्गं नार्भदं भक्तिभावतः ।
 ऐहिकं किं फलं तस्य मुक्तिस्तस्य करे स्थिता ॥”

(हिमाद्रिधृत यागवल्का)

adopt this special symbol in their devotional creed. Though Tejpur was the capital of Bāna, yet the centre of liṅga-worship in Assam is Bisvanāth. It was arranged to celebrate here the worship of a crore of liṅgas, but owing to one falling short it could not establish its absolute precedence. Stories about the great power of Bāna are current everywhere in Assam.

6. The Kimmerian Influence.

The
Bactrian
origin of
Kirmi.

As the Purānas and Tantras are main sources of information regarding the Koch or Mlechchha races, so for an account of the Plavas, who held sway for a long time over the north of Assam, the only book to which we can turn is the Yoginī Tantra, which thus describes their origin :—"The Bāhlikas of the Sālba line were killed to a man in the great war of Kurukshetra, where the race were probably doomed to extinction. Kirmi, a Bāhlika woman, came and began to practise severe penances before the image of Bisvanāth in the hope of being rewarded with the birth of a son. Now at that time Bāna, a descendant of Bali, was keeping watch at the gate of the temple of Bisvanāth as Mahākāla. He was fascinated with the beauty of Kirmi and appearing to her in the garb of an ascetic insinuated himself into her affections. Their union was blessed with the birth of a son named Mahāṅkusa. Through the influence of Kirmi a portion of Assam on its extremity was secured to her son as a kingdom. The prince conducted his worship according to the rites which

obtained among his maternal people. His descendants are known as the Plavas.”¹

According to Mr. Hodgson the Lepchas give the Bhutanese the name of Prah or Pluh from which the word *Plava* appears to be derived.

1. “शाल्लपुत्राय वाह्नीका मताः कौरवसंयुगे ।
 नान्यो वंशधरः कश्चित्तदंशे तु विलोचने ॥
 तदा वाह्नीकरमणौ कीर्त्तिं गुंथयन्तौ शुभा ।
 युवती सुन्दरी रम्या तपःशीला महात्मनिः ॥
 पुत्रे च्छया गता काशीं तपस्ते पे दिवानिशम् ।
 स्थित्वा विश्वनाथाय तु हारे तु मुक्तिमण्डपे ॥
 तदा वलिमुतो वाणो महाकाली महावलः ।
 तद्धारपालको देवि ! शशमे तां निरीक्ष्य च ॥
 मदघौकारमादाय भैरवः काममोहितः ।
 कपालमाली मदिरामोदितोन्मत्तवेशवान् ॥
 तपस्त्रिवेशमास्थाय निर्लज्जो रतिनायकः ।
 कीर्त्तिर्जातो महादेवि ! वन्दुकामलकादिभिः ॥
 भैरवो विपुलस्तनवतो जातो महाङ्कुशः ।
 कीर्त्तिः सुतो महादेवि ! महाकालस्य रेतसः ॥
 वात्सल्यं तव दृष्ट्वा तत्पुत्रो भैरवस्य च ।
 तयानिशं रतिञ्चापि महाङ्कुशमहाभुजम् ॥
 राजप्राप्तिं सह तस्यापि कीर्त्तिं चेष्टाञ्च शान्श्रवि ।
 कामरूपान्तरं शालवं राज्ञं दत्त्वा महाङ्कुशे ॥
 कीर्त्तिर्योभिः समासाय कुलावारपरायणः ।
 समर्चयन् यथा काश्यां तथा तत्रापि सर्व्वदा ॥
 तत्पूजां तव महतो भविष्यति दिवानिशम् ।
 महाङ्कुशः समुद्भूय काश्यामास्नन्दनं कुतः ॥
 ततः प्रवेति नामा च लगाम मणिमण्डपम् ।
 एवं ते कथितं देवि ! चरितं प्रवसन्मतम् ॥”

The question now is, in what time did the Plavas, the descendants of Kirmi, make their first appearance in the northern region of Kāmarūpa? The author of the Yoginī Tantra traces the origin of the Plavas from the union of Bāhlika Kirmi with Bāna.

Kimmerians

The references in the Mahābhārata and Purāṇas allude to the region of the Bāhlikas as situated in the north of the Himalayas. According to the opinion of European Scholars the territory intervening between the Hindukush and the river Oxus was known in ancient times as Bāhlika or Bactria. It covered the whole of Eastern Persia and at one time the empire of Bactria stretched up to the frontier of Media and Russia. In this extensive country there dwelt in ancient times an invincible people called the Kimmerians, the account of whose greatness up to the 8th century B. C. is available. They were then vanquished by the Scythians and driven across the Caucasus into Asia Minor. They were the masters of Asia Minor for over a century. The following is an account of their rule in Asia Minor :—

“These, the Gomer of the Hebrews and ‘Kimmerians’ of the Greeks had come down from the northern steppes through the passes of the Caucasus and contemporaneously with the related tribe of the Tréres, which had apparently come through Moesia and across the Hellespont were now in full possession of the northern part of Asia-Minor, and meditating a descent upon Mesopotamia. One body actually penetrated the mountains through the gorge of Euphrates in 678 B. C. and was driven back by the Assyrians into Anatolia. Here for a time the Kimmerians

and their allies, the Tréres ranged unchecked as a great scourge to the civilized inhabitants as were the Huns to the Romans."²

The contributor to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* writes thus about the Kimmerians :—

"To sum up the history of Scythia, the oldest inhabitants of whom we hear in Scythia were the Cimmerians ; the nature of the country makes it probable that some of them were nomads, while others no doubt tilled some land in the river valleys and in the Crimea, where they left their name to ferries, earthworks and the Cimmerian Bosphorus. They were probably of Iranian race : among the Persians, Herodotus describes a similar mixture of nomadic and settled tribes."³

Kimmerian
girl in
Assam,

From the *Yoginī Tantra* and the writings of European antiquarians it appears that as the Bāhlikas or the Iranian Kirmis had to quit their homes before the onslaught of the Scythians for distant lands in the far west, so some among them might have migrated to the far east and entered the Assam valley through its north-east passes. The memory of the past events of this race in the dim twilight of history having faded away, the author of the *Yoginī Tantra* invented the story of the Kirmi woman, or it may be that a princess of the Kimmerian fled in fear of her life into Assam, where she was spending her life in great purity, observing religious ceremonies at Bisvanāth in the east of Assam, when she was won over by a prince of the Bāna dynasty who was a votary

2. Hall's *The ancient History of the Near East*, p. 495.

3. *Encyclopædia Britannica*, (11th ed.) Vol XXIV, p. 528.

Bhutanese
are
offshoots of
the
Kimmerian
Plavas.

of Siva. It was in this way that the intermingling of the two ancient dynasties the Kirmi and the Bāna gave rise to a mixed race called the Plavas who are a branch of the present Bhutanese.

Through the power and influence of the Bāna dynasty Bisvanāth in the east of Assam acquired celebrity as a second Kāsī. In the Yogini Tantra it is this Bisvanāth which is referred to, as Kāsī. It is not wholly unlikely that as the Bānas having come from the farthest west of India established their rule in Kāmarūpa, so the Kirmi dynasty whose original home was in Bactria or Persia might have, upon entering into Assam, carved for itself there a kingdom over which they ruled.

The great enemies of the Kimmerians were the Scythians, who drove them in the 7th century B. C. from Persia and even pursued them into Kāmarūpa under their king Afrasiab. There is a faint allusion to this event in Ferishtā, but here they do not appear to have been successful, as there is no evidence of permanent occupation of any portion of Kāmarūpa by the Scythians.

However a detailed study of the history, manners and customs of the Plavas is much to be desired for the widening of our historical knowledge.

7. The Assyrian Influence.

In the history of Kāmarupa we find evidence of the rise of the Mlechchha (Mechh) or Asura dynasty even during the ascendancy of the Aryans. Now who were these Mlechchha-Asuras? In the Satapatha Brāhmanas of the white Yajurveda occurs the following—

“The gods then cut her (Vāk) off from the Asuras, and having gained possession of her and enveloped her completely in fire, they offered her up as a holocaust, it being an offering of the gods. And in that they offered her with an anushtubh verse, being deprived of speech were undone, crying ‘He’lava, He’lava’¹; such was the un-intelligible speech which they then uttered and he (who speaks thus) is a Mlechchha. Hence let no Brāhmana speak Mlechchha language, since such is the speech of the Asuras”².

The
language
of
Mlechchha-
Asuras.

From the above it will seem that it was those who could not speak the Vedic tongue with all their efforts, but spoke slang, that were set down as Mlechchhas. From the interpretation of the Mlechchha by Sāyana also it seems that in the Vedic age those among the Asuras who offered their worship in vulgar expressions of dubious meaning were known as Mlechchhas.³

1. According to Sāyana, ‘He’ lava, He’lava’ of the text is a slang expression meaning ‘the enemy, the enemy.’

2. Satapatha Brāhmana, translated by J. Egging (published in the Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXVI) p. 31—32.

3. “उपनिषदां ज्ञातव्यां सन्दिग्धां वाचस्पतु गतवन्तोऽसुराः । स
क्लेशः सन्दिग्धार्थस्यापमं शब्दस्य वचसो भाषणं यत् तत् क्लेशमिति व्यर्थः ;

It is said in the *Manu-Samhitā*,—"That is the land of sacrifices where the black antelope is naturally available. The rest is Mlechchha country where no sacrifices can be held."⁴ The *Vishnu-Smṛiti* defines Mlechchha country as 'the place where caste-system is unknown. Āryāvarta is outside it'.⁵ In the *Manu-Samhitā* also the Mlechchha language is said to be different from the Aryan tongue and Manu has even enjoined that the Vedic mantras should never be uttered in the presence and hearing of the Mlechchha.⁶ He has however hinted that even among the four castes of the Aryan community there were people who spoke the tongue of the Mlechchas or had mixed with them.⁷

From the *Mahābhārata* we learn that when the Pāṇḍavas were proceeding to Vārāṇāvata, Vidura gave confidential instructions to Yudhisṭhira in the Mlechchha tongue⁸. From this it will appear that even among the classes there was no dearth of men who could speak and write

यवा य ईदृशीं वाचं वदति, स स्नेच्छः । तस्मात् न स्नेच्छेत् स्नेच्छो न भवेत् तदीयामपार्थिव्यां भाषां न द्रुयादित्यर्थः । असुर्या असुरेष्वाहिता ।"

(शतपथब्राह्मणभाष्ये सायण ३।२।१।२४)

4. "क्षणासारक्षु चरति स्रगो यत्र स्वभावतः ।
स ज्ञेयो यज्ञियो देशो स्नेच्छदेशस्त्वतः परः ॥" (मनु २।२३)
5. "पातुर्वर्ण्यव्यवस्थानं यस्मिन् देशे न विद्यते ।
स स्नेच्छदेशो विज्ञेयोऽपार्थ्यावर्त्तकान्तरं ॥" (विशु)
6. "मुखवाङ्मूढपज्जानां या लोके जातस्यो वह्निः ।
स्नेच्छवाचसाय्येवाचः सर्वे ते दस्यवः स्मृताः ॥" (मनु १०।४४)
7. Mann, VII. 49.
8. *Adiparva*, Chap. 145.

Mlechchha, although since the Brāhmanic ascendancy in the Vedic age this tongue had always been at a discount. It has already been noticed that in the age of the Satapatha Brāhmana Mlechchha was regarded as the language of the Asuras. In the list of Sanskrit roots compiled by Pāṇini, 'Mlechchha is found to have been accepted among words of the *Unchchha* or abandoned class'.⁹ Kātyāyana, the commentator of Pāṇini, in the course of his discourse on the utility of the study of grammar, seems to have followed Satapatha Brāhmana with regard to the Mlechchha tongue.¹⁰ The great commentator Patañjali also has echoed him in saying that a Brāhmana should never speak the Mlechchha tongue;¹¹ yet from what he says in his *Paspasāhnika*, one is led to imagine that even the Mlechchhas recited the Vedic mantras, however incorrectly, although strongly discouraged by the Aryans. Also in the commentary of the *Mimāṃsā-sūtra* by Savara-svāmin, mention is made of Mlechchha language. He says 'the Mlechchhas use many words which convey no meaning to the Aryans, e. g. Pika, nema, mata, tāmarasa. These are some of the words used by the Mlechchhas conveying no sense to them. Not to speak of words which can be explained according to the Vedas, Nirukta or grammar, even where words cannot be interpreted in the light of Aryan

The
Mlechchha

9. Pāṇini, VI. I. 160.

10. "क्षेच्छावा सामुस" ६।१।१६० वार्त्तिक ।

11. "तेऽसुरा हेतयो हेतयो इति कुर्वन्तः परावभूतु सत्त्वाद ब्राह्मणेन न क्षेचित्त वे नापभासित वे क्षेच्छावा एष यदपशब्दः क्षेच्छा नामभूतेत्यर्थेयं व्याख्ययाम् ॥" *Mahābhāṣya*, Vol. I (Benares Edn) p. 5.

speech, such meanings will have to be accepted as may be in vogue among the Mlechchhas, however vulgar they may be.¹²

The
Mlechchha,
a distinct
race.

In his translation of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, Eggeling has interpreted 'Mlechchha' as meaning 'barbarian'.¹³ In Sanskrit literature however, the synonym for 'barbarian' is *barbara*, while the true meaning of Mlechchha is outcaste foreigners. From a simultaneous study of the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, Manu Samhita, Mahābhāshya and Savara's commentary of the Mimāṃsā Sūtra also, it will seem that in olden times the Mlechchha formed a distinct race by itself and that outside the limits of Āryāvarta there was a country known as the home of the Mlechchhas. Now the question is how to definitely localise this Mlechchha land.

12. "अथ यान् शब्दान् आर्यान् कस्मिंश्चिदर्थे आचरन्ति, स्नेच्छास्तु कस्मिंश्चित् प्रयुज्यन्ते, यथा पिक-नेम-मत-तामरसादिशब्दाः, तेषु सन्देहः, किं निगमनिरुक्तव्याकारणवर्जिन धातुतोऽर्थः कल्पयितव्य, उत यत्र स्नेच्छा आचरन्ति, स शब्दार्थः ? * * * तस्माद्धातुतोऽर्थः कल्पयितव्यः इत्येवं प्राप्ते ब्रूमः—'चोदितमग्निष्टैरपि शिष्टानवगतं प्रतीयत, यत् प्रमाणेनाविरुद्धं तत् अवगम्यमानं न न्याय्यं त्यक्तुं । यत्तु शिष्टाचारः प्रमाणं इति, तत् प्रत्यक्षानवगतेऽर्थे । यत्तु अभियुक्ताः शब्दार्थेषु शिष्टाः—इति ततोच्यते, अभियुक्ततराः पक्षिणां पोषणे बन्धने च स्नेच्छाः । यत्तु निगमनिरुक्तव्याकारणानामर्थवत्तेति तत्रैवामर्थवत्ता भविष्यति, न यत्र स्नेच्छैरप्यवगतः शब्दार्थः । अपि च निगमादिभिरर्थे कल्पमानेऽव्यवस्थितः शब्दार्थो भवेत्, तत्र अनिश्चयः स्यात् । तस्मात् पिक इति कोकिलो याज्ञः, नेमोऽई, तामरसं पद्मं, मत इति दाकमर्थं पादं, परिमण्डलं शतच्छिद्रं ॥"

(लौमांसा-दर्शने शबरभाष्य १।३।१०)

13. Vide J. Eggeling's Satapatha Brāhmaṇa (in the Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXVI.) p. 31-32.

It is said in the Brihat Parāśara Samhita that Brāhmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sūdra—are the four original castes. The remaining castes have sprung in course of time from their intermarriage. The Mlechchha however are not of mixed blood, being an independent race by itself.¹⁴ On the authority of the Satapatha Brāhmana it has been shown that the Mlechchhas were distinct from the Aryans and were included among the Asuras.¹⁵ Hence, there is no discrepancy between this authority and Parāśara.

In the Vedic age the Asuras became separated from the Aryans and having crossed the borders of India settled in Persia or Turkey. Gradually they increased in strength and influence,

14. “ब्रह्मचरिविद्वत् शुद्रा जातान् जुक्रमेण तु ।

क्रमातिक्रमतांश्च स्रज्छान्वयणसम्भवः ॥” (बृहत्-पराशर ६ अ०)

15. The Paurāṇikas are not agreed as to the origin of the Mlechchha. Even the Mahābhārata is not always consistent on this point. While in (85 chapters) of the Adiparva the Yavana and the Mlechchha are said to have descended from king Yayati's sons Turvasu and Anu respectively, in 175 Ch. of the same parva, Pundras, Kirātas, Yavanas, Sinhalas, Barbaras, Khasa, Chivukas, Pulindas, Chīnas, Hūnas and Keralas, all are included in the Mlechchha race. Again in the Matsya-purāṇa we have it that the deep dark Mlechchha sprung into existence while the dead body of king Vena was being churned by the Brāhmanas (Ch. 13). The Smārtas, however, regarded Mlechchha as a pure and original race. Again, Varaha Mihira say, “We are told by all the Sāstras that one of them (the Yavanas) was Mlechchha.” Following this authority the Greeks also in later times were included among the Mlechchhas. From these conflicting accounts it seems that after the Mlechchha-Asuras had gained supremacy in Eastern India, Paundras, Yavanas, Kirātas and many more such races intermingled with them and were subsequently known by the Paurāṇika Brāhmanas under the general category of Mlechchha. These were however in reality, quite different from one another in origin, each being a distinct race by itself, as the Smritis tell us.

Original
home of the
Mlechchha
Asuras.

and it is now over five thousand years since they founded the kingdom of Assur or Assyria about two hundred miles to the North-west of Babylon and founded the capital of Assur on the banks of the Tigris.¹⁶ Their possessions extended from Asia Minor to the Caucasus mountain. In the Old Testament mention is made of a royal priest under the name of Melchi-dezek (Gen. 14. 17). From Caucasus he went over to Salem (Jerusalem) and became 'king and priest of supreme El'. After his name 'Melchi came to denote 'king' and 'high-priest' in Syrian and Assyrian languages.¹⁷

It is too well known to be mentioned that in olden times territories were generally named after the peoples residing in them. In the Kiskindhyākāṇḍa (43th Chap.) of the Rāmāyana we are told that far off from India, in the north-west, there lived the Mlechchhas, the Daradas, the Yavanas, the Madras &c, and also there was a country named after the Mlechchhas. From the geographical account given in the epic we have reasons to believe that this Mlechchha country was not far from the Mt. Caucasus. It is very likely that it was the priests of this place who were known in ancient times as Melchi (Sanskrit Mlechchha). It may seem superfluous to note that Assyrian high-priests were selected and appointed from here. From a study of the Samhita portion of the Vedas also, we learn that a time was when the

16. Hall's the Ancient History of the Near East, (3rd. ed.) p. 193.

17. Rev. B. B. Edward's Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge, p. 792.

bounderies of Āryāvarta extended upto the border of Babylon.¹⁸ The spite of Vedic Aryans against these high-priests of Asuras, as indicated in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and later Sanskrit literature, was due to the defective way in which they pronounced Vedic mantras and hymns. From the Nirukta of Yāska we come to learn that at one time the people of Kāmboja spoke Vedic Sanskrit. Even prior to that a degenerated form of Vedic Sanskrit was in use among the Mlechchhas who were high-priests of the Asuras. This is hinted in the Zend Avesta by Ahur Mazd or Asura Maya. In their zeal to spread their religion and extend their influence the Melchis or Mlechchha high-priests of Caucasus crossed the Kailāsa mountain and reached the hills of Kāmarūpa via Tibbet.

The
Mlechchhas
were high-
priest of
Asuras or
Assyrians.

The following account from Kālikā Purāṇa bears testimony to Mlechchha influence in Kāmarūpa—

'Kāmarūpa was once recognised as the foremost of the holy places. Whoever offered worship, performed his ablutions or even drank water here, was after death promoted to the rank of the attendants of Siva or the goddess Kāmākhyā. Thus the place came to be outside the jurisdiction of Yama (God of death) who could not exercise his rights here. In his difficulty the God of death appealed to Brahmā (the Creator), who took him along to Vishṇu (the Protector). The latter heard them and led them on to the presence of the great god Siva (the Destroyer). He pleaded for Yama and concluded his

18. Vide Hindi Visvakosha or Encyclopædia Indica, Vol. II. art. Āryāvarta. (आर्यावर्त)

argument by saying that some way must be devised to re-establish and make invincible the authority of Yama over Kāmākhyā as otherwise disorder would reign rampant here. Siva appreciated Vishnu's argument, came down to Kāmākhyā with his retinue and ordered goddess Ugratārā and his own followers to drive all people out of Kāmākhyā.

Advent
of the
Mlechchha-
Asuras in
Kāmarūpa.

Accordingly at once commenced the work of expulsion. When all other people had been driven out, Ugratārā and the Pramathas tried to tease the great sage Vasishṭha out of Kāmākhyā. Highly incensed at this, he cursed the goddess in the following words—"Although I am a Muni, you seem to be disowning me and are trying to expell me from here. Take then this from me. From now you shall be worshipped with all the Mothers according to non-Vedic ways of worship and let your followers who have been let loose in a drunken state befitting the Mlechchhas—be such for good and continue to live here as such. Now even Lord Siva, who has thus most indiscreetly set you upon a person like myself well-versed in the Vedas and practising religious austerity in all its rigour, shall have to reap the fruit of his action. Let him be a Mlechchha and live here decorating his body with ashes and bones. And this Kāmarūpa itself shall be infested by Mlechchhas till Vishnu shall appear here in person for its redemption". With this dire curse the great sage left the place, and at once all turned into Mlechchhas, Ugratārā became Vāmā (i. e. was worshipped according to non-Vedic ways), Siva adopted the Mlechchha way of life, Vedic rites and observances disappeared from

Kāmarūpa and the four castes left the place'.¹⁹

Although Kālikā Purāṇa itself is not very old, the story quoted above from it is not its own invention, but merely a reproduction of an ancient tradition. It was in the prehistoric period of the country, probably in what is known as the Bronze age, that the Vedic Aryans rose into prominence here having defeated Pazis and eclipsed their influence. We have already spoken on this question and no repetition is needed here. From the above account in the Kālikā Purāṇa it would seem that just as one branch of the Assyrians marched off westward till they reached Asia Minor and succeeded in establishing their influence and culture, under the name of Melchi-zedaks, over the religious and social life of the High-Priests, another branch, under the name of Mlecha, crossed the Kailāsa mountain and reached Kāmarūpa *via* Tibbet. The story of the decline of Kāmarūpa as a holy place, of the waning of the Aryan influence here and of the rise of the Mlechchhas, as spread by the Paurāṇikas, may be due to the help that the people of Kailāsa or Tibbet may have rendered to the Mlechchha invaders in establishing themselves in Kāmarūpa. Much evidence has been collected of late establishing that like the Phoenicians (spoken of before) the Assyrians also were worshippers of many gods. Some have even collected materials to be able to assert that in very ancient times, before the introduction of caste-system in Aryan society, this people not only

Melchi-zedak
High-Priests.

19. Kālikā-purāṇa, Chap. 81.

lived in close touch with the Aryans, but were themselves followers of the Vedic faith. In course of time, however a strong line of demarcation was drawn up between the two communities, not only alienating the Assyrian's sympathy with but turning him into a deadly enemy of all Vedic rites and observances. And then in consonance with the time-forces then prevailing and in obedience to their contrary tastes generated by indigenous causes, they took to worshipping quite a large number of male and female deities similar to that of the Phœnician. And that branch of them which established itself in Kāmarūpa, introduced here the worship of many gods. This was opposed to the Aryan spirit, and hence it was that the Vedic Brāhmanas condemned them so severely.

As to the Mlechchha family which was the first to rise into prominence in Kāmarūpa we have the following story in the Kālikā-purāna :—

'A Mlechchha king named Naraka was born of the alliance between Varāha and Prithivī; Janaka, king of Videha, brought him up. At the age of sixteen this Naraka came to the city of Prāgjyotisha which was then peopled by the uncivilised Kirātas addicted to meat and drinking. Ghaṭaka was their chief. Naraka defeated him in a battle and drove the Kirātas away to the other side of the river Dikkara-vāsini (modern Dekrong), then established himself at Prāgjyotisha, founded his capital and began to rule over the country. He brought over here many Brāhmanas and people of other high castes. He married Māyā, daughter of the ruler of Vidarbha, and soon became a staunch devotee of the goddess Kāmākhyā.

Mlechchha-
King
Naraka.

Unfortunately for him, however, he made friends with an Asura named Bāna and at his instigation began to heap insults upon Brāhmanas and their good men. One day he went too far and prevented even the great sage Vasishtha from seeing the image of the goddess. Enraged at this the sage cursed him thus—In no time goddess Kāmākhyā will disown you, and Krishna will put you to death. Naraka appointed an Asura, Hayagrīva by name, as his Commander-in-Chief and Mūrāsura as the protector of his state. Encouraged by the Asuras, he became very proud and haughty and cast to the winds all the principles of morality. Once he went so far as to steal away from the territories of Himālaya 16000 damsels. Incensed at this Srikrishna marched against him, and having killed all his adherent Asuras put Naraka himself to death. And as his trophy the victor returned to his capital, Dvārakā, with these 16000 damsels, besides a large booty consisting of one lac of elephants and a large amount of precious stones and other valuables. Before departing, however, he installed the deceased king Naraka's son, Bhagadatta, on the throne of Prāgjyotisha.' (Chap. 81.)

Story of
Naraka.

It has already been observed, in narrating the history of the Panis, that there ruled in Kāmarūpa more than one king bearing the name of Naraka. Incidents relating to these different persons, were in later times woven together by the author of Kalikāpurāna into the life of one Naraka. The Naraka who flourished during the age of king Janaka of Mithilā cannot evidently be the Naraka killed by Krishna and succeeded

Upendra
Sinha's
account of
Naraka.

by his son Bhagadatta. One is Pani or Phœnician, while the other is Melchidezek or a descendant of the Assyrian High-Priests. Rājā Upendra Siṅha of Rāni, Assam, passing for a lineal descendant of Narakāsura, has written a history of his family in Assamese, under the title of 'Rāja-Vaṅśāvali (a genealogical history of the royal dynasty), in which we find the following account—

'There is a tradition that—a Brāhmana was born as a part incarnation of Varāha (boar) and as a result of a god's boon a female child was born as a part incarnation of Prithivī (earth) at the house of a Brāhmāna. Like the digits of the moon the child began to grow. The latter Brāhmana received the son of Jagannātha-Dvija a devotee of Vishnu as the bridegroom of his daughter. The name of the bridegroom was Vishnudeva and that of the bride was Vishnumāyā. When she became youthful, he visited her during her *menstruatum*. As a result she gave birth to a fierce child. Both of them began to lament for the birth of such a child and began to weep saying, "Oh! what has befallen to us!" When a voice from the heaven said, "Know him to be a great man. Owing to the guilt of his parents, the child has been born at the time of Naraka so he should be named Narakāsura. Know him to be an indomitable King. His life will be put an end to by his father." Narakesvara became King of Kāmārūpa. There were sixteen thousand females within his house. One of his sons was Bhagadatta. With the consent of all, Krishna made

him king. * * * * This place came under
the sway of the Mlech".²⁰

- (২০) "ইকথা থাকোক হুনা শ্রুতাবর গতি ।
বরাহর অংশে ব্রাহ্মণর উতপতি ॥ ১২৫
পৃথিবীর অংশে সতী ব্রাহ্মণর বরে ।
কস্তা স্ত্রী জন্মিলাহা পায়া দেব বরে ॥
দিনে দিনে বাড়ি লাই যেন চন্দ্রকলা ।
সেহি মতে বাড়ি লাই ব্রাহ্মণর বালা ॥ ১২৬
বিভূরত ব্রাহ্মণেরো বরক সাধরি ।
জগন্নাথ-বিষ্ণুপুত্র নানিলাহা বরি ॥
নামত সে বিভূদেব কস্তা বিভূসায়ী ।
স্নানিগণ ঠারা বিহা দিল দেবজায়া ॥ ১২৭
কতোকাল গৈয়া তার বাড়িল যৌবন ।
রজস্বলী কালে নিতো করিলা গমন ॥
দশমাস বর্ষ ধরি করিয়া সাধন ।
পুত্র এক জন্মাইলি মহাভয়কর ॥ ১২৮
পুত্রক দেখিয়া হুহৌ অন্তরো হাহাকার ।
কি স্তল কি ভৈল বলি কানয় অপার ॥
সেহি বেলা দৈববাণী পরিলা নিস্তর ॥
এহি মহাপুরুষক জানিযো নির্ণয় ॥ ১২৯
পিতৃর মাতৃর দোষে নরকর কালে ।
নামত নরকাহর জন্মিলাস্ত ভালে ॥
পৃথিবীপালক ইতো জানিবা দুর্বোয় ।
পিতৃহাতে পরি জানা আর হৈব ওয় ॥ ২০০
নীলশৈল পূর্ব আংজ্যোতিষপুর নাম ।
তাহাতে নিবাসে মহোৎসবে অবিশ্রাম ॥
কামরূপ রাজা ভৈলা বরক দেখর ।
বোড়শ হাজার কস্তা গৃহর ভিতর ॥ ২০১
পুত্র আছিল এক তান নামে ভগদত্ত ।
রাজা পাতিলেক কুকে বুঝিবা সম্মত ॥.....
স্নেহ অধিকার ইতো জানা মহারাজি ২৬০"

mentioned in the Vedas as a goddess) "may possibly be the same as the Babylonian goddess Ili or Bilat Ili, queen of gods. According to Sāyana, she is the goddess presiding over the Earth."²⁶ Melchi-sedek or Melchi-dezek was the first and chief votary of Baal and El or Ilā.²⁷ And this Elā or Ilā seems to have subse-

26. Balfour's *Cyclopædia of India*, (3rd ed.) Vol. II, p. 145.

27. In "Faiths of the World", by Revd. James Gardner M. A. pp. 400-401, the following account is found of the order of Melchi-sedek or Melchidezek :—

"Melchisedek—an order of priesthood mentioned by the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as higher as well as more ancient than the order of the Aaronic priesthood under the Mosaic economy. Melchisedek appears to have the only individual who held the office of high-priest by Divine appointment before the giving of the law. And in the statement of the apostle that Jesus Christ was 'a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek,' may be perceived a beautiful propriety, far, unlike the Levitical priesthood, the sacred office was combined with regal authority in the case of Melchisedek, thus clearly pointing him out as a striking type of our High Priest, of whom it was prophesied by Zechariah, 'He shall be a priest upon his throne'; and besides, the priesthood of Melchisedek was more honourable, being instituted previous to, and independent of, the Mosaic economy, and one to which, as we learn from the reasoning of the apostle in Heb. VII, the Levitical priesthood was distinctly subordinate, for separated, as Melchisedek is declared to have in point of descent from all around him, he is considered as receiving tithes from those who, though not yet born, were represented by their progenitor Abraham. ... And by his connection with the order of Melchisedek, our High Priest was identified with an economy independent of the temporary institutions of Moses, and, accordingly, it is said, 'He was made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life'. ... We are brought to the comfortable and delightful conclusion, that we have an everlasting and unchangeable High Priest, appointed of God as was Aaron but called after the order of Melchisedek. ... Melchisedekians 'held Melchisedek to be the power of God, and superior to Christ,'"

quently been transformed into Kāmākhyā. The ceremony of Ambuvāchī symbolises the menstrual period of goddess Ilā or Prithivī (earth). Even now Kāmākhyā is supposed to pass through this period on that occasion. Thus there remains but little doubt as to the identity of El and Kāmākhyā.

Mlechcha-
dvija or
Melchi-dezek,

It is not unlikely that the High-priests of the Asuras or Assyrians were regarded as Mlechchhas and Dvijas or Melchi-dezeks being born of god Baal and goddess El or Ilā.²⁸ In the dim past some of them came over to Kāmarūpa or its neighbourhood and spread their Melchi-religion here ; and it must have been some one or other of these people who wrested authority from the Naraka dynasty reigning at the time, and assuming the title of Naraka declared himself king of the Mlechchhas. The Varāha and Prithivī from whom Upendra Siṅha (Rājā of Rāni), supposed to be a descendant of Narakāsura, has traced the descent of the primitive Brāhmaṇa, may be taken to have been Baal and El or Ilā respectively. The worshipper of these gods was known as Vishnu-vrata (meaning Melchi-sedek or high-priest of god). His daughter Visnu-māyā was married to Vishnudeva son of Jagannātha Dvija or Melchi-dezakian. The priestly and the royal authority being both combined in him, Narakāsura obtained supremacy here. In the Vedic age it was mostly the Brāhmaṇas who officiated as priests. Following this practice, the ancestors of Narakāsura

Vishnudeva
and
Vishnumāya
resemble
Baal and El.

28. It is found also from the account left by Herodotus that Scythian priests held themselves as sons of Ella or the goddess of Earth.

were known as Mlechchha-Dvijas (Mlechchha Brāhmanas) or Melchi-dezeks. Even after his descendants had been bound with the ties of relation with many of the Kshatriya royal houses of India and had assumed the Kshatriya's distinctive title of 'Varman', they continued to pass as the Mlechchha Brāhmanas of this part of the country. Hence it will appear that it was for this reason that the Chinese Pilgrim Yuan Chuang who visited India in the 7th century A. D. was led to speak of Bhāskara Varman, although a lineal descendant of Narakāsura, as being a Brāhmaṇa prince.²⁹ It is also stated in the Kālikā-purāṇa that Naraka the Mlechchha king discharged Brāhminic function.³⁰ Every historian of modern times is of opinion that the Chinese pilgrim was wrong on this point. It will appear, however, from the Rāja-vaṁśāvali of Upendra Siṁha and the Kālikāpurāṇa that Yuan Chuang's view cannot altogether be neglected. In the copper-plates granted by them the descendants of Asura Naraka are found during many succeeding ages to have styled themselves as Nārakas³¹ or Bhaumas or Mlechchhas. From the above

29. Vide Watters—On Yuan Chuang, Vol. II, p. 185-186.

30. Vide p. 40-41 of this book.

31. In the Atharva-Saṁhitā (12.4.36) the kingdom of Naraka is identified with the territories of Yama, which has led Dr. Whitney to translate Naraka as 'hell'. The truth is, this land of Kāmarupa through which flowed the river Lauhitya was also known as 'Yama' and even the Nāgas who roamed in its woods called Yamavana received the epithet of Yāmya in the Purāṇas. It is said in the Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa (published under the title of Vāyu-purāṇa, 69, 24), that the tract of land close to the western hills and extending from the Lauhitya to the Eastern Sea or Lohitasāgara was called Yamavana. It is a well

geneological history of Upendra Siṅha we do also come to learn that for three or four hundred years, 'Mlech' had been changed by the people into 'Mech'. This race or community has been living in Kāmarūpa for about five thousand years.

The word 'Mlechchha' seems to have no longer been obnoxious in Kāmarūpa after the Mlechchhas had established their supremacy here. This is clear from the fact that the kings of the Naraka dynasty allowed themselves to be styled 'Mlechchhādhinātha' in the copper-plate inscriptions of their times along with 'Nāraka' or 'Bhauma'. The word 'Mlechchha' is now generally found to stink, just as much as the word 'Pādrī' does, in modern times, in the nostrils of bigoted Brahmins. In the vedic age it must have been much more opprobrious. In Kāmarūpa, however, Mlechchha came to be a term of respect.

It has been previously noticed that in ancient Assyria, Melchi-dezek was both the King and the High Priest. In the same way, as found on many occasions, the Mlechchha kings of Kāmarupa also officiated as high priests. This custom seems to have come down even to the days of Rājā Visva Siṅha of the Mech family, who, founded the royal house of Koch

Priestly
function of
original
Mlechchha
Kings

known fact now that the Lauhitya is no other than the modern Brahmaputra, to the south-west of which are situated the Garo hills. Geologists have ascertained that the low land lying south of these hills and comprised within the district of Mymensing was mostly under water. It was this sea which washed the foot of the Garo hills that was the Lohita-sāgara (Red sea) of the Rāmāyana, and was said in the Manu Samhitā to form the eastern boundary of Aryāvarta.

Bihar. It was during the reign of his son Naranārāyana that a revival of Brāhmanical supremacy took place to the gradual abolition of this time-honoured custom. Both he and his brother Sukladvaja were untiring in their devotion to the Brāhmanas whom they had brought over from Mithilā and Gauḍa and established here; this resulted in increasing the powers of the Brāhmanas and in decreasing the supremacy of the privileged classes. Thus even those who had long enjoyed the right and privilege of discharging the priestly functions in the temples of the goddesses Kāmākhyā and Kāmatesvarī or Kāmadā of Goswānimāri, were deprived of this privilege which was transferred to the Brāhmanas. Nay, they were even barred for ever from entering the precincts of the places of worship. The Brāhmanas whom they themselves had established and patronised were too shrewd for them and gave them to understand that serious evil would befall them even if they would visit the places of worship. Since then, under this superstitious threat the royal house of Koch Bihar, has always abstained from entering the temples of Kāmākhyā and Goswānimāri.

The manners and customs, rites and observances of the primitive Phœnicians and Assyrians were identical in many respects. The chief deities of the Phœnician pantheon are found also to have been accorded important places in the Assyrian pantheon. It is a matter of no small surprise and curiosity that in Kāmarūpa or Assam the Koch descendants of the Panis as well as the Mech descendants of the

Some
similarity of
Koch and
Mech.

Mlechchhas are found to observe, from times immemorial, those very articles of faith and manners and customs which these two peoples are found to have observed thousands of years back, in Asia Minor. This fact has led many to regard these two different races, the Koch and the Mech, as originally same. In the Yoginī-tantra both of them have been spoken of as a Kuvācha and Mlechchha. Although their manners and customs have been considerably modified and reformed by the influence of the Vedic Brāhmanas who settled among them, yet even quite recently *brahmacharya*, the life of abstinence and austerities was an unknown thing to them, as well as the purity of the matrimonial bed. The widow's fast as well as the other austerities practised by her were undreamt of among them. This is endorsed even by the Rājavañśāvali of Upendra Siṅha of the Naraka dynasty as well as the Rājavañśāvali compiled under the auspices of Mahārāja Harendranārāyana of Koch-Bihar.³² Also in the Padmapurāṇa we have the following :—

National
rites and
customs of
the Mlech.

“First, the Kuvāch (or Koch) and then the Mlechchha (or Mech)—both are of base origin. They speak the *pisācha* (devil's) tongue and are ignorant of all purity in manners and customs. They have no idea of cleanliness in mind and body, of meditation, and of offering water to the gods and manes of departed ancestors. No food is forbidden to them, neither the cow nor the Brāhmaṇa is respected by

32. Vide Ms of Assam Government Collection, no 4 (Gauhati), leaf 27b and no. 2 (Darrang) leaf 8b.

them, and their kings, ministers and priests are all given to drinking.”³³

It is but natural that the Vedic Brāhmanas should look down upon all people who observed rites and ceremonies that were detestable in their eyes. Hence the very word Mlechchha in their vocabulary came to connote all that is impure and unholy, unclean and dirty and so not only those who first acquired this title but also those races who intermingled with them during their supremacy in Eastern India or adopted manners and customs condemned by the Aryans, were given the general epithet of “Mlechchha” in the Purānas. In the following pages an attempt will be made to show how the descendants of the Mlechchha Narakāsura spread and established their influence in Eastern India.

33. “कुवाचकाः परे स्ते च्छा एते ये कूटयोमयः ।
 तेषां पेशाचिकी भाषा लोकाचारो न विद्यते ॥
 नास्ति शौचं तपो ज्ञानं न दैवं पिष्टतर्पणं ।
 दानश्राद्धादिकं यज्ञे सुराणाञ्च प्रपूजनम् ॥
 पितृणाञ्च न श्रद्धा विजदेवतपस्विनाम् ।
 ज्ञानलोपादतस्तेषां मलशौचं न विद्यते ॥
 सातरं भगिनीशान्यां गृह्णिषीं कामयन्ति च ।
 स्रव विपर्ययो लोकासदाचारो मलोमसः ॥”
 नृपा स्ते च्छाः सुरापाश्च तथा मन्त्रिपुरोहिताः ।
 मनुष्येश्च वलिस्तेषां मंस्यैर्मांसैर्निरामिषः ॥”

The Rise of the Mlechchha Dynasty.

Naturally not a little flutter and surprise may have been caused by our assertion in the preceding pages that the descendants of High-priests of Assyria crossed the Mount Caucasus, their western-most frontier, and marched eastward till they conquered and established their supremacy in Eastern India. The soundness of such an assertion is likely to be called in question by many. The fact however is as clear as anything and must not be laughed at. If from their home in Kāmboj at the foot of Indian Caucasus the Hindus could establish the Kingdom of Kamboj or Cambodia on the shores of the distant Pacific Ocean, which is now an admitted fact, what is there to make one disbelieve that a branch of the High-Priests of the Assyrian Empire came out from the far-off shores of Assyria and established their religion and influence in this holy land of Kāmarūpa? Physical barriers never succeed in resisting the onward march of a powerful and resolute nation. Then to the inhabitants of this part of the country 'Mlechchha' is not a term of reproach as it was to the Vedic Brāhmanas. This is clearly borne out by the fact that the rulers of Kāmarūpa, of the Mlechchha blood, felt no scruples if they did not take actual pride, in styling themselves 'Mlechchha Kings' in the copper plates issued by them. Although at the hands of the authors of the Mahābhārata and the Purānas the Mlechchha rulers of Kāmarūpa tracing their descent from the Asura dynasty, have fared no better than the Asuras at the hands of the Aryan authors of the Vedas and Purānas,

The
Mlechchha
significance.

their prowess and prosperity could not be ignored, but have been constantly referred to by these authors.

Anecdotes of the Mlechchha-chief Bhagadatta, son of Narakāsura and son-in-law of king Duryodhana are to be found not only in the inscriptions of Kāmarūpa of different ages, but also in the Mahābhārata and the Purānas of the Aryans. According to the Mahābhārata, Kalikāpurāna and Yoginī-tantra Lord Krishna killed Narakāsura and installed his son Bhagadatta on the thorne of Prāgjyotisha. We find in the Sabhāparva of the first work that Arjuna landed on the Sākaladvīpa and after a hard fight defeated all the princes there. Then with these defeated princes as his allies, he attacked Bhagadatta, the king of Prāgjyotisha, but met with a strong resistance. Bhagadatta was not only a great warrior himself but was backed by a large number of warriors from Kirāta, China and the Sea-coasts. After eight days of constant fighting, Bhagadatta noticed that Arjuna was tired, and said to him propitiously, "You are the son of my dear friend Indra, and I am also much pleased with the manner in which you have conducted war against me. So I will agree to whatever you may demand of me." Bhagadatta having thus surrendered and paid tribute, Arjuna left his country with an invitation to him to attend the Rājasūya Sacrifice to be performed by Yudhisthira.³⁴

Account
of
Bhagadatta.

34. "विजिग्ये शाकलं द्वीपं प्रतिविध्यं च पार्थिवं ॥ ५

शाकल द्वीपवासिनां समद्वीपेषु ये शृपाः ।

Invasion of
Assam by
Arjuna with
the Scythian
princes.

This account from the Mahābhārata leaves no doubt that Bhagadatta was a very powerful warrior ruling over an extensive territory from China to the Sea-shores. Even a hero of unmatched skill like Arjuna could not think of attacking him before he had secured the co-operation of all the princes of the Sākaladvīpa or Scythia. But even this combination was of no avail. The battle raged furiously for eight consecutive days when signs of exhaustion were noticed not in Bhagadatta but in his opponent. It was only his own pity and admiration for the powerful son of his friend that led Bhagadatta to yield to him. He had never been defeated by Arjuna, the glories of Bhagadatta will call forth greater admiration if we but remember that this account of the fight is given by the Mahābhārata itself—which is marked for its advocacy of the Pāṇḍava cause. We also learn from the above account that the Sākaladvīpa was not far from China; for if not close to one another creating a feeling of jealousy and rivalry, why should the princes of

अर्जुनस्य च सैन्यैस्तैर्विग्रहस्तुमुलोऽभवत् ॥ ६

स तानपि महेष्वासान् विजिग्ये भरतर्षभ ।

तैरेव सहितः सर्वः प्राग्ज्योतिषसुपाद्रवत् ॥ ७

तत्र राजा महानासीङ्गदत्तो विशोपते ।

तेनासीत् सुमहद्व्युद्धं पाण्डवस्य महात्मनः ॥ ८

स किरातेश्च चीनैश्च ब्रतः प्राग्ज्योतिषोऽभवत् ।

अन्यैश्च बहुभिर्योधिः सागरानूपवासिभिः ॥ ९

ततः स दिवसानष्टौ योषयित्वा धनञ्जयं ।

महसन्नमोद्राजा संयामविषमकलमं ॥ १०

(सुभाषणं २६ अ०)

that place go out against Bhagadatta on the side of Arjuna ? On the occasion of the Rājāsūya Sacrifice at Hastināpura Bhagadatta arrived there with a retinue of Yavanas and presented Emperor Yudhishtira with excellent horses, utensils made of precious stones and ivory hilts of swords.³⁵ Just as Arjuna marched north-ward defeating and bringing under subjugation all who stood against him till he turned north-eastward and met with Bhagadatta, so also his elder brother Bhima marched victoriously eastward till he reached Lauhitya, defeated all the Mlechchha princes ruling along the Sea-coasts, and received as tribute from them, heaps of gold and silver, pearls and precious stones, sandal and other perfumes.³⁶

Bhima's
conquest.

From the accounts left of the vast conquests made by Arjuna and Bhima it will appear that Bhagadatta although generally recognised as

35. "प्राग्ज्योतिषाधिपः शूरो स्त्रेच्छानामाधिपो बली ।

यवनैः सहितो राजा भगदत्तो महारथः ॥ १४

आजानेयान् हृद्यान् शीघ्रानादायानिलरंहसः ।

बलिं च कृतस्त्रमादाय द्वारि तिष्ठति वारितः ॥ १५

अश्वसारथ्यं भाण्डं शृङ्खलतन्मरुतसौन् ।

प्राग्ज्योतिषाधिपो दत्ता भगदत्तोऽब्रजन्तदा ॥" १६

(सभाष्यं ५१ अ०)

36. "वसु तेभ्य उपदाद्य लौहिलयमगमह्वी ॥ २६

स सर्वान् स्त्रेच्छपतीन् सागरानुपवासिनः ।

करमाहारयामास रत्नानि विविधानि च ॥ २७

चन्दनागुहवस्त्रानि मणिस्त्रीक्रिककम्बलम् ।

काञ्चनं रजतं चैव विद्रुमं च महोदलम् ॥" २८

(सभाष्यं ३० अ०)



the ruler of Prāgjyotisha, had his capital established on the summits of the Himālayas. To this probably may have been due the epithet of 'Sailālaya' (having his home on the mountain) given to him in some places of the Mahābhārata.³⁷ It is said in the Brāhmāṇḍapurāṇa that the king Bhagadatta ruled as far as Kailāsa or Western Tibet.³⁸ Quite a large number of Mlechchha-chiefs are found to have ruled in that age as tributary princes to him, over Lauhitya (or the country drained by the Brahmaputra) and Sylhet, Cachar, Chittagong and the neighbourhood. It is found in the Udyogaparva of the Mahābhārata that in the Great Kurukshetra war he sided with Durjyodhana with a whole *akshauhini** of Chinese, and Kirāta soldiers of golden complexion,³⁹ and gave many proofs of his uncommon valour and prowess. After Dronāchārya had been appointed commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army, a terrible encounter once took place between Bhagadatta and Bhīma, in the course of which the latter, by virtue of his special skill in the art of Añjalikā, made himself invisible inside the elephant his opponent was riding, and began to give the poor creature no end of troubles. His friends however, thought that he had been killed, and furiously fell upon Bhagadatta. But he proved a match for them

Bhagadatta's
prowess.

37. "एष शैलालयी राजा मगदत्त प्रतापवान् ।"

(स्त्री-पद्वे २३।१०)

38. Vide Brāhmāṇḍapurāṇa.

* Consisting of 109,350 foot, 65,610 horse, 21,870 Chariot and 21,870 elephants.

39. Mahābhārata, Udyogaparva.

all. Then came in Yudhishtira, Sātyaki and Abhimanyu, but they also fared no better. Quite an appalling number of soldiers lay down, dead and dying, on the ground, killed and mortally wounded by Bhagadatta or smashed by the weight of his elephant. At this plight of the Pāṇḍava army, Arjuna rushed forward to meet the victor. He himself was also attacked simultaneously from the right and the left by Duryodhana and Karna. They, however, could not long stand against him but fled away to save their lives when Arjuna fell furiously upon Bhagadatta. Finding himself unable long to withstand the shock of his adversary's attack, the latter discharged at him the irresistible Vaishnava weapon. Arjuna's life was threatened, and so Krishna advanced before him and received the shock of the weapon upon his own breast. At length Bhagadatta was killed by the joint efforts of Arjuna and Krishna.⁴⁰

Bhagadatt's
death.

40. When Krishna received the Vaishnava weapon upon his breast, Arjuna addressed him in these words, "You promised that you would only drive my chariot and never fight yourself. How is it that you have broken that promise now? When I am alive and present, you should not have thus fought yourself." Krishna said in reply, "Vishnu has assumed (lit. divided Himself into) four different forms for doing good to and protecting honest men. The fourth of these forms rises after a thousand years' sleep and confers boons on those who seek boons at his hands. On one such occasion Prithivī begged of him the following boon—"Be pleased, O Nārāyaṇa, to grant the Vaisnava weapon to my son Naraka that he may not be subject to death at the hands of the gods and demons." The boon was granted and at Naraka's death the weapon has passed into the hands of Bhagadatta. It is so ordained that none in the three worlds can withstand its shock. So, to save you from immediate death, I received it on my breast." (Dronaparva, Chap. 28). Whatever may be the

Although a Mlechchha, the Mahābhārata has not been niggardly in his praises—in describing him as pious and devoted to the Kshatriya creed. This leads one to suspect that he might have had greater regard for the Vedic faith of the Aryans than for the Mlechchhaism of his fathers.

Settlement
of
five Gotras
of the Vedic
Brāhmanas.

From a study of Rājvaṁśāvali by Rājā Upen-dra Siṁha we come to learn that inspired by King Duryodhana, his father-in-law Bhagadatta invited Brāhmanas of the five Gotras (Stock) viz., Kāsyapa, Sāṇḍilya, Bharadvāja, Upamanyu and Parāsara. It cost five lacs of rupees.⁴¹ It is very difficult, however, to find out, with any exactitude, the age of Bhagadatta or the time when at his invitation the Vedic Brāhmanas came down to settle in Kāmarūpa. According to the Mahābhārata, the Purānas and the Tantras as well as the copper-plate grants made by the Kings of the Bhagadatta line, he was a contemporary of the Kuru-Pāṇḍavas. And according to a copper-plate inscription of Mahārāja Bhāskara Varman of the same line we find that he was 11th indescend from Pushya Varman who flourished 3000 years after Bhagadatta.⁴² From the account left by the Chinese pilgrim Yuan-Chuang⁴³ as well as subsequent Chinese accounts it would seem that Bhāskara

meaning of this explanation, it is clear from this that Arjuna alone could not overpower Bhagadatta, Krishna also was to some extent responsible for his death. And this adds another testimony to the uncommon prowess of Bhagadatta.

41. Assam Govt. Collection, Gauhati, No. 4 Rājavamsāvali, 260-265.

42. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XII, p. 73.

43. Watter's on Yuan Chuang, Vol. II, p. 191-193.

Varman ruled over Kāmarūpa from about 620 A. D. to 650 A.D. and he was 12th in descent from Pushya Varman. Now, therefore, taking three generations as making up a century we find about 275 A. D. as the age of Pushya Varman and if Bhagadatta is taken to have flourished 3000 years before him, we get 2725 B. C. or thereabouts as his age. From the astronomical account of the time of Bhishma's death, as given in the Mahābhārata, it has recently been proved by a competent person that it took place in 2829 B. C.⁴⁴ If this is correct, we find a difference of about hundred years between the accession of Pushya Varman and the death of Bhishma. Considering the enormous lapse of time, this difference is certainly negligible.

44. Sāhitya Parisad Patrikā, Vol. XXIII, p. 168.

CHAPTER II

History of the Mlechchha dynasty.

(A. D. 3rd Century—12th Century.)

In the previous chapter we have discussed the date of Bhagadatta who died fighting in the battle of Kurukshetra. But there is much difference among scholars about the date of the great battle of Kurukshetra and of Kuru-Pāṇḍavas.¹ It has been mentioned before that some scholars have tried to show, by astronomical calculations, that Bhishma died in 2829 B. C. On the other hand some have maintained from Pauranic chronology that the Great battle of Kurukshetra took place about 1424 B. C.² Under the circumstance there is a difference of 1400 years in round numbers. So instead of trying to come to any conclusion from two such extreme cases, it would be safer to tread on firmer ground.

1. According to Āryabhata and Varāhamihira the Kali-Yuga commenced in 3102 B. C. According to Āryabhata after 662 Kali era *i.e.* in 2440 B.C. and according to Varāhamihira and Kalhana, the author of Rājatarangini, after 653 Kali era *i.e.* in 2449 B. C. the great battle of Kurukshetra took place. On the other hand from an inscription of Pulakesi, emperor of the Deccan (634 A. D.) the commencement of the Kali era and the battle of Kurukshetra appears to be contemporaneous. Again it is stated in the copperplate inscriptions of Bhāskara Varma that Bhagadatta had reigned 3000 years before Pushyavarmā the 12th ancestor of Bhāskara Varma.

2. K. P. Jaiswal's Pauranic Chronicles and Kali Yuga. J. B. & O. R. S. Vol. III, p. 260.

It is stated in the Nidhanpur grant of Bhāskara Varman that Bhagadatta was the son of king Naraka and Bhagadatta's son was Vajradatta. 'When 3000 years had passed after Vajradatta, Pushya Varman was born in this dynasty. Pushya Varman's son was Samudra Varman who was likened to the 5th ocean, in whose kingdom the weak were not oppressed by the strong, who shone like a jewel and who was quick in accepting a duel. Datta-Devi was the name of his queen, she gave birth to Bala Varman whose strength (*Bala*) and armour (*Varma*) were never separated and whose soldiers were always forward against his enemies'. It is known from the inscriptions of Samudra Gupta that the name of his queen, too, was Datta-Devi,³ and that he defeated king Bala Varman.⁴ It appears from this that Samudra Gupta and Samudra Varmā married in the same family. If so, Samudra Gupta was compelled, inspite of this relation, to fight with Bala Varman according to the rules of Asvamedha Sacrifice which took place in 350-380 A. D. So it may be admitted that he lived about this time. Perhaps this invasion of Samudra Gupta limited the power of the kings of Kāmarūpa for a time.

It is also written in the History of Burma that a king named "Samuda" reigned in Upper Burma.⁵ Mr. (now Sir) Gait has written, "The Indian king Samuda who according to Forlong, was ruling in Upper Burma in 105

Pushya
Varman
circa 275-300
A. D.

Samudra
Varman
circa 300-340.

Bala Varman
and
the invasion
of Samudra
Gupta.

3. Fleet's *Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. III, p. 21.

4. Do, p. 13.

5. Phyre, *History of Burma*, p. 2.

A. D. must have preceeded thither through Assam, and so must the Hindus who led Tcham-pās or Shāns in their conquest of the mouths of the Mekong in 280 A. D.”⁶.

It appears to me that this Samuda must be our Samudra Varman. As Samudra Gupta became the paramount sovereign in Northern India so Samudra Varman had been a paramount sovereign from the river Karatoyā to the Pacific Ocean.

Kalyāna
Varman
circa 340-400.

Then the account of this dynasty is given in the copper-plate as follows,—

Ganapati
Varman
circa 400-480.

“His (Bala Varman's,) son born of (queen) Ratnavatī was the king named Kalyāna Varman, who was not the abode of even very small faults. (V.10.) From him, (queen) Gandharvavati begot a son Ganapati (by name) who was incessantly-raining gifts as (the god) Ganapati (rains) ichor, who was endowed with innumerable qualities, for the extermination of strife (as Ganapati) is born to destroy the Kali age. (V. 11)

Mahendra
Varman.

‘His queen Yajñavati brought forth a son Mahendra Varman, as the sacrificial fire (produces) fire, who was the repository of all sacrificial rites (like fire). (V. 12.)

Narāyana
Varman.

‘From him who mastered his self, Suvratā generated a son Nārāyana Varman for the stability (of the rule) of world, who like Janaka (or his father) was well-versed in the principles of the Philosophy of the (supreme) Self. (V. 13.)

Mahābhūta
Varman.

‘From him, Devavati, like Prakriti from Purusha, bore Mahābhūta Varman, the sixth *Mahābhūta* (element) as it were, for the steady succession of (all) the properties. (V. 14.)

'His son was Chandramukha, who was charming by (possessing) all the arts as the moon (by the digits), whom Vijñānavatī brought forth, as the sky did (the moon), a dispeller of (all) gloom (as the moon dispels the darkness.) (V. 15.)

Chandra-
mukha.

'Thereafter (queen) Bhogavatī of (good enjoyment) became the cause (of birth) of Sthita-Varman, the supporter of the world, who had innumerable (sources of) enjoyment, (just as) Bhogavatī (the city of the snakes of the nether regions) is (the source) of prosperity of the chief of the snakes, the supporter of the earth, who has a myriad of hoods. (V. 16.)

Sthita
Varma.

'From that king of unfathomable nature, of innumerable gems, and the spouse of the (goddess) Lakshmī, was born Sri-Mrigāṅka, who had no blemish, just as the moon, free from spots is born from the milky ocean, whose substance is unfathomable, whose pearls cannot be counted, and from which Lakshmī was produced. (V. 17.)

'His (Sthita Varman's) son king Susthita-Varman was born of Nayanādevī, who held the kingdom in his own hand, and was renowned as Sri-Mrigāṅka. (V. 18.)

Susthita
Varma.

'By whom was given away to supplicants as if it were (a clod of) earth, that shining Lakshmī (i.e. wealth) whom (god) Hari like a miser bears with joy in his bosom." (V. 19.)'

It may be safely inferred from the account, given above, of the ancestors of Bhāskara Varman that there was no paucity of learned, brave and powerful kings in this dynasty.

In the Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa there is a reference to Raghu's conquering Prāgyjotisha, and it is also stated that the king of Prāgyjotisha was present in the meeting of princes for the choice of bridegroom by Indumatī. Any one perusing these accounts would be led to infer that in the estimation of Kālidāsa the king of Prāgyjotisha was one of the most powerful princes and a match for many of them. It is stated in Kalhana's Rājataranginī that king Meghavāhana wished to marry the daughter of the king of Prāgyjotisha (Circa 440 A. D.).

Invasion of
Yasodharman

King Yasodharman of Mālava conquered Kāmarūpa about 534 A. D. when he was opposed by Mahārāja Chandramukha Varman. After the subjugation of various countries by Yasodharman, the power of the Guptas became crippled to a certain extent. At this time the Maukharis became powerful and were trying to lord it over the Guptas. The Emperor Harsha Gupta gave his sister in marriage to the Maukhari king and tided over the misfortune for a time, but Maukhari king Isāna Varman had all along cast a covetous eye upon the Gupta Empire. To checkmate the Maukharis and to save his own empire from them, Dāmodara Gupta, the great grandson of Harsha Gupta contracted a matrimonial alliance with Āditya Vardhana, the new king of Sthānvīsvara bestowing in marriage his sister Mahāsena Guptā. Owing to that alliance the Gupta Emperor Mahāsena Gupta could with their help conquer up to Kāmarūpa. At this time Susthita Varman⁸ (son of Sthita Varman and grandson

Kāmarūpa
Conquered by
Mahāsena
Gupta
circa 575
A.D.

8. Dr. Fleet mistook this Susthita Varman with Susthita Varman of the Maukhari Dynasty.

of Chandramukha Varman) king of Prāgyoti-sha was defeated by Mahāsena Gupta.

It is stated in the Aphaṣṭ inscription of Adityasena that, "The mighty fame of Mahāsena Gupta marked with honour of victory in war over the illustrious Susthita Varmā, (and) (white) as a full-blown jasmine flower or water-lily, or as a pure necklace of pearls pounded into little bits (?) is still constantly sung on the banks of (the river) Lohitya."⁹

Susthita
Varman.

In the 7th chapter of Bāna's Harsha-charita a slightly variant reading substitutes Susthira-varman for Susthita-varman. It has been described in the Harshacharita that at that time Prabhākara-vardhana, the son of Āditya-vardhana, defeated in the north the Hūnas living in Gāndhāra and on the Himālayas and that in the west he conquered Sindh and then defeated the ruler of Gurjara and Mālava. Then the Maukhari dynasty was powerful in western Magadha. For this reason Prabhākara could not extend his territories in the east. He allied himself with the ruler of Kanauj by marrying his only daughter Rājyasrī to the Maukhari king Graha-varman. Immediately on receipt of the news of Prabhākara-vardhana's death, the Mālava king Deva Gupta, the son of Mahāsena Gupta, killed Graha-varman and took Rājyasrī a captive with a view to recover his paternal kingdom. Before this happened, Prabhākara-vardhana's eldest son, Rājya-vardhana (the elder brother of emperor Harsha-vardhana), had marched

9. Fleet's Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III, p. 146.

Harsha-
vardhana
and
Bhāskara
Varman.

against the Hūnas at his father's behest. As soon as he received the news of his father's death, he hastened to the capital and ascended the throne of his father. Very soon after this, he got information that his brother-in-law was killed and that his sister was a prisoner and immediately he came to Magadha where he inflicted a defeat on Deva Gupta. Narendra Gupta, the king of Gauḍa and a relative of Deva Gupta, invited Rājya-vardhana to his camp and treacherously made away with him in secret. Sasāṅkadeva, the king of Karnasuvarna was also implicated in this act of assassination. Hearing of the tragic death of his elder brother Harshavardhana lost no time to march towards the east with a large army. On the way the ambassador of the king of Kāmarūpa waited upon him with presents and informed him that his master had a vow from his early life that he would never bow his head to any one but the God Siva. There were three ways to the fulfilment of it viz (1) the conquest of the whole earth, (2) death, (3) alliance with a hero like king Harsha. He was therefore desirous of making friends with him. Harsha gladly accepted the presents sent by the ruler of Kāmarūpa. From that day forward the two were united in bonds of friendship. It is inferred from what the ambassador from Kāmarupa had said that the rulers of Gauḍa, and Karnasuvarna were deadly enemies of the king of Kāmarūpa. It is needless to say that when Harshadeva invaded Gauḍa from the west, Bhāskara Varman helped him from the east. The ruler of Gauḍa was defeated and killed by Harsha. At this time

Sasāṅkadeva took shelter in the hilly regions of southern Rāḍha and thereby managed to save his life. Then Harsha-vardhana conquered the whole of Āryāvarta and in order to facilitate the work of administration removed his capital to Kanauj. From the accounts of the Chinese traveller Yuan-Chuang we learn that just as Harsha-vardhana had assumed the title of Kumāra Silāditya on his accession to the throne of his brother, so also the king of Kāmarūpa, who ascended the throne after his elder brother Supratishṭhita Varman, came to be known as Kumāra Bhāskara Varman. While Harsha was busily engaged in the conquest of Northern India and the removal of his capital to Kanauj, Sasāṅkadeva availed himself of this opportunity and took up arms against him collecting a vast army from Southern Rāḍha, Orissa and Kaliṅga. At this time Sasāṅka took special care to destroy the ancient artistic works of the Buddhists. From a perusal of the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim it seems that king Sasāṅka had invaded Pāṭaliputra, the capital of Magadha and Bodh Gayā the chief centre of Buddhism and that the Magadha king had sustained a defeat at his hands. Otherwise he would never have ventured to destroy the principal object of Buddhist worship. Beyond Magadha lay the dominion of the powerful king Harsha. Hence, though Sasāṅka had met with success in his invasion of Magadha, he did not dare to lay his hand on Sārnāth and other Buddhistic holy places outside Magadha. But there is no doubt that the whole land from Magadha to Karnasuvarna,

Sasāṅkadeva
of
Karna-
suvarna,

may, to Kaliṅga, came to be under his sway for some time.

Hearing of the atrocities committed by Sasāṅka, Harshadeva marched to inflict on the ruler of Karnasuvarna the punishment he deserved. Long and sanguinary battles were fought between Harsha and Sasāṅka in Magadha, Gauḍa and Karnasuvarna. At this time Bhāskara Varman, the king of Kāmarūpa rendered a good deal of help to his dear friend Harsha-vardhana. But for his assistance, it is doubtful whether Harsha could have vanquished Sasāṅka. After his defeat, Sasāṅka was compelled to take refuge in the inaccessible hilly tracts of Mayūrbhanj.¹⁰ After this Harshavardhana became Emperor having conquered the whole of Āryāvarta. Kanauj became the capital of his empire. In order to ensure good government in Eastern India and to guard the conquered provinces against a fresh attack by Sasāṅka, Western Magadha was placed under the rule of Pūrṇavarma, Eastern Magadha of Mādhava Gupta an intimate friend of Harshadeva and the third son of Mahāsena Gupta, and Gauḍa and Karnasuvarna (Rāḍha) of Bhāskara Varman. That Bhāskara Varman ruled Karnasuvarna for some time has been proved by the copper-plate inscriptions found in the village of Nidhanpur in Sylhet that has been cited above.

The very first sentence of this copper-plate-grant runs as follows :—

“Hail from the camp located at Karnasuvarna with the appropriate epithet of victory owing to possession of splendid ships,

Bhāskara
Varman
as ruler of
Karna-
suvarna.

elephants, horses and foot-soldiers.”¹¹ It is not known how long Bhāskara Varman was in Karnasuvarna. But the aforesaid copper-plate bears testimony to the fact that during his stay there he made grants of several villages to the Brāhmins of the locality. It is certain that many learned Brāhmins and a number of Kāyasthas skilled in conducting the affairs of the state went to Kāmarūpa with him.

Bhāskara Varman was a hero of wonderful military genius. He was no less noted as a patron of learning and a friend of the learned. He kept himself well-informed of the learned men living in other countries. When Yuan Chuang the Chinese pilgrim had been residing at Nālanda (about 637 A. D.) Bhāskara Varman came to know of him and invited him to his court. In the records of his travels we have got the following :—

The Chinese
pilgrim
Yuan
Chuang's
Narrative.

“Bhāskara-varman, styled Kumāra, the king of Kāmarūpa had heard of him and longed to see him. So he sent messengers to Nālanda to invite and urge the pilgrim to pay him a visit. Yuan Chuang at first declined and pleaded his duty to China ; but his old Buddhist teacher Silabhadra convinced him that it was also his duty to go to Kāmarūpa on the invitation of its king who was not a Buddhist. The pilgrim at length yielded, travelled to that country and was received by the king with great honour.”¹²

11. “सखि महानौहस्यवपति-स'पुत्रपात जयशब्दान्वय-स्त्रायावारात्
कर्णसुवर्णवासकात् ।” Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XII, p. 73.

12. Watters, 'On Yuang-chuang's travels in India,
Vol. I. p. 348.

"The description in the records proceeds to relate that from Pun-na-fa-tan-na (Pundra-var-dhana) the (Chinese) pilgrim travelled east above 900 li, crossed a large river and came to Ka-mo-lu-po (Kāmarūpa). This country was more than a myriad li in circuit and its capital above thirty li. The country was low and moist; the crops were regular; the jack-fruit and co-coa were in great esteem though plentiful; there were continuous streams and tanks to the town; the climate was genial. The people were of honest ways, small of stature and black-looking. Their speech differed a little from that of Mid-India; they were of violent disposition and were persevering students; they worshipped the devas and did not believe in Buddhism.

So there had never been a Buddhist monastery in the land and whatever Buddhist there were in it, performed their acts of devotion secretly; the Deva-Temples were some hundreds in number and the various systems had some myriads of professed adherents. The reigning king, who was a Brāhmaṇa by caste and a descendant of Nārāyaṇa Deva, was named Bhāskarvarma, his other name being Kumāra; the sovereignty had been transmitted in the family for 1000 generations. His Majesty was a lover of learning and his subjects followed his example; men of ability came from far lands to study here; though the king was not a Buddhist he treated accomplished Sramanas with respect."¹³

Another extract from the same writer is given below:—

"At this time king Silāditya was in a district

Ka-chuon-kila. He had been on an expedition to a country called Kung-yü-ta (Koṅgoda) and on his way back to Kanauj to hold a great Buddhist council there. Hearing of the arrival of the Chinese pilgrim at the court of king Kumāra, he sent a summon to the latter to repair to him with his foreign guest. Kumāra replied with a refusal saying that the king could have his head but not his guest. "I trouble you for your head" came the prompt reply. There upon Kumāra became submissive, and proceeded with the pilgrim and a great retinue to join Silāditya."¹⁴ Bhāskara-Varma met the emperor at a place called Kayaṅgala (modern Rājmaḥal) with the Chinese pilgrim in his train. From this place the two monarchs most triumphantly marched towards Kanauj with their armies. Empire Harshavardhana proceeding along the southern bank of the Ganges and Bhāskara Varman along the northern.

Bhāskara
Varman
at Kanauj.

The Chinese traveller was present at the great Buddhist assembly held at Kanauj. He was an eye-witness to what happened and has left the account of it.

This great religious assembly was convened towards the beginning of the spring of 644 A. D. Besides Bhāskara Varman, the lord of Kāmarūpa, the king of Valabhi and eighteen other feudatory princes, four thousand Sramanas and about three thousand Brāhmanas and Jain Sannyāsins attended this grand meeting. A great Buddhist monastery was built on the bank of the Ganges. In it there was a hall, one hundred feet high in which was set up a very tall golden image of

Buddha. Every day a procession of three hundred elephants and twenty kings went round the city carrying another golden figure of Buddha three feet in height. The emperor himself held the canopy above the image. At this time the emperor dressed himself like Sakra and his friend Bhāskara Varman like Brahmā. The latter also held a white Chāmara in his hand.

From the account of this great assembly it appears that of all the persons invited to it king Bhāskara Varman was shewn the highest honour. Though he was an orthodox worshipper of the god Siva yet there seems no doubt that late in life he came to be favourably inclined to Buddhism on account of his association with the emperor Harsha and the Chinese pilgrim.

After the close of the assembly at Kanauj, Harshavardhana came to Prayāga where he performed a great Dānasāgara ceremony (ceremony of unbounded charity). During this festival Bhāskara Varman, the Chinese pilgrim, the feudatory princes and innumerable sannyāsins and poor people assembled at Prayāga. In this ceremony the emperor gave away all the public money, and all his own valuables.

It has been mentioned before that the Emperor, while returning after the conquest of Koṅgoda (modern Ganjām) met with Bhāskara Varman at Kayaṅgala (modern Rājmahal). It is needless to say that the conquest of Koṅgoda became an easy affair to Harshavardhana as Sasānka was now dead. At that time the whole of Uḍra and a portion of Kaliṅga and southern Kosala were annexed to the empire of Harsha-vardhana. It seems probable

Bhāskara
Varman as
emperor of
Eastern
India.

that at the time of his return from Prayāga the Emperor honoured and rewarded his friend Bhāskara Varmā by giving him the sovereignty of these newly conquered territories. The contemporary inscriptions do not mention of any such sovereignty. But it is recorded in the Nepal inscription of Jaya-deva at some subsequent date that the Lichchhavi king Jayadeva married Rājyamati the daughter of Harshdeva of Bhagadatta's line and ruler of Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kaliṅga, Kosala, and other countries.¹⁵ Emperor Harsha-vardhana passed away in 648 A. D. Some historians think that after the death of Harsha-vardhana there arose some trouble over the succession to his empire and that Mādhava Gupta's son Ādityasena availed himself of this opportunity and made an attempt to establish imperial sway by the performance of a horse-sacrifice and that at this time Harshadeva a scion of Bhāskara Varmā's family took possession of Gauḍa and Uḍra. When, after Harsha's death, his general Arjuna had seated himself on the throne of his master, the powerful Chinese army entered into India in order to subdue him. The rulers of Magadha and Kāmarūpa were able to vanquish the usarper with the help of this army. Hence in the contemporary history of China Bhāskara-Varmā has been dignified with the title of the 'ruler of Eastern India'. But from an examination of the contemporary events it seems that just as Bhāskara-Varmā was established in Karnasuvarna during Harsha's reign,

Bhāskara
Varman
as ruler of
Eastern
India.

15. Bhagavānlāl Indrajī's *Inscriptions from Nepal*, *Vide Indian Antiquary*, Vol. 1X, p. 177.

so also he might have been known as the lord of Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kaliṅga and Kosala at his instance.

Kāmarūpa
during the
reign of
Bhāskara
Varman.

In the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim some light has been thrown on the condition of Kāmarūpa during the reign of Bhāskara Varmā. In the *Kalikāpurāṇa* and the *Yoginī-tantra* there is mention of hundreds of temples of the gods in this country. The Chinese pilgrim also speaks of the same thing. In that age Kāmarūpa was regarded as a seat of learning. Students from all parts of India came here and received education in the various Sāstras. The Chinese pilgrim speaks so much about the prosperity of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa in that remote age that we may say that not even the shadow of it exists at the present day.

The Chinese traveller has called Bhāskara Varmā a Brāhmana. Modern historians think that he was mistaken in this. But to speak the truth Yuan Chuang made no mistake. It has been clearly shewn before that the family in which Bhāskara Varmā was born was in ancient days regarded as Mlechchha Brāhmanas. Though they were not known as Aryan Brāhmanas yet it does not seem strange for them to be known as Mlechchha Brāhmanas as they performed the offices of the High priest and of the king. The descendants of Bhagadatta were already recognised as the Aryan Kshattriyas on account of their connexion with them and their assuming the title of Varman in imitation of them. But still it does not seem improbable that among their own folk and in their own society they were known as Mlechchha Brāhmanas. Yuan Chuang made no mistake while mention-

ing the caste of Harsha and many other Indian princes. It is not at all likely that he made a mistake about the caste of Bhāskara Varmā with whom he had been in touch for a pretty long time.

Just as on the death of Harsha without leaving a suitable heir, great confusion arose in his Empire, so also the affairs of the kingdom of Kāmarūpa were left after Bhāskara Varmā's death. At this time Adityasena of the Gupta dynasty assumed the title of Mahārājādhirāja ('lord-paramount') and Paramabhaṭṭāraka ('great king') and retrieved the lost glory of his line. He performed a horse-sacrifice as a result of which the whole of Āryāvarta including Kāmarūpa had to acknowledge his supremacy. When the power of the Gupta emperors declined the kings of this place asserted their independence. Mahāsena Gupta had made the weight of the Gupta arms felt in Kāmarūpa. But it was Ādityasena during whose time the country had to fully acknowledge the supremacy of the Guptas.

It is not definitely known who was the immediate successor of Bhāskarā Varman. About this time there flourished a Mlechchha line of kings who too were known as the descendants of Bhagadatta. The name of the first king of this dynasty was Sālastambha. In the copper-plate grant of this dynasty Vighra-stambha, Pālaka-stambha and Vijaya-stambha are described as coming after him one after the other. The copper-plate grant of Vanamāladeva gives the names of two kings of this line Śrī Harisha and Prālambha and

Sālastambha
and
other rulers.

describes them reigning after Vijayastambha. In this copper-plate the following extract occurs immediately after the mention of the name of Sri Harisha :—

‘The king whose brother exceeded all kings (in valour) and was regarded as the only hero by his enemies and who being unequally conditioned gave up neither valour nor his chariot and won heaven thereby’.¹⁶

(Sri Harisha,

From the above version it appears that Sri Harisha was the heroic brother of the ruler of Kāmarūpa. It seems probable that he stood in the same relation with the King of Kāmarūpa as subsisted at some subsequent date between the two brothers Nara-nārāyana the King of Koch Bihāra and his brother Sukladhvaja. But Sri Harisha, though the elder brother had to leave the Kingdom of Kāmarūpa to his younger brother, was himself compelled to live in Gauḍa which formed a part of their territories. Most probably it is he who has been described in the inscription of Jayadeva as ‘Harshadeva’ the ruler of Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kaliṅga and Kosala and other countries, and also the father-in-law of Jayadeva the second. In this inscription Jayadeva has been called the daughter’s son of Ādityasena the ruler of Magadha. Under these circumstances it may be assumed that that Sri Harisha or Sri Harshadeva flourished about 725 A.D. a little after the death of the king

16. “सालसन्धप्रसूतैः श्रीहरिचान्ते नन्दोपासितैः ॥८॥

दिवमासद्वान् यत्नं भूषुञ्जी यैको वैरिवीरोभूत् ।

आता शौर्यत्वागिरसमात्रारथीतिनृपः ॥” ८

Vide Rangpur Sahitya Parishad Patrika, Vol IX, p. 24.

Ādityasena. After his death the aforesaid Mlechchha kings having the word *stambha* (स्तम्भ) added to their names ruled Prāg-jyotisha. It is likely that the last king of this line was killed in battle in Puṇḍra-vardhana by the descendants of Sailodbhava. Before this we had thought this king to be Śrī Harshadeva of Bhagadatta's line who was lord of Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kaliṅga and Kosala. But from an examination of the connected historical events we now understand that it was Śrī Harshadeva who first defeated Prachanḍadeva who had been set up by the Saila dynasty and then wrested from them Kaliṅga and Kosala. It was on account of his defeat at his hands that Prachanḍadeva was compelled to become a *Sannyāsi* and to seek refuge in Nepal. Though Śrī Harsha was honoured with the title of 'ruler of Gauḍa, Uḍra, Kaliṅga and Kosala' yet he was not destined to enjoy his kingdom for a long time. First Yasovarmadeva the king of Kanauj and then in 732 A. D. Ādisūra the king of Rāḍha grew powerful and worsted Śrī Harsha. It is probable that he lost his life in a war with Ādisūra. Here was an end of the rule of the Mlechcha Kings in Gauḍa. In the *Brāhmaṇa-Kulapañji*, written by Vāchashpati Misra Kāmarūpa has been described as the land of the best warriors.¹⁷ Ādisūra conquered Kāmarūpa with Karnasuvarna. We learn from the 'Karana-Varnana' a genealogical book of the Vārendra Kāyasthas written by Kasidāsa that

The Saila
Kings and
Harshadeva.

17. "नरवरभटके रचिते कामरूपे"

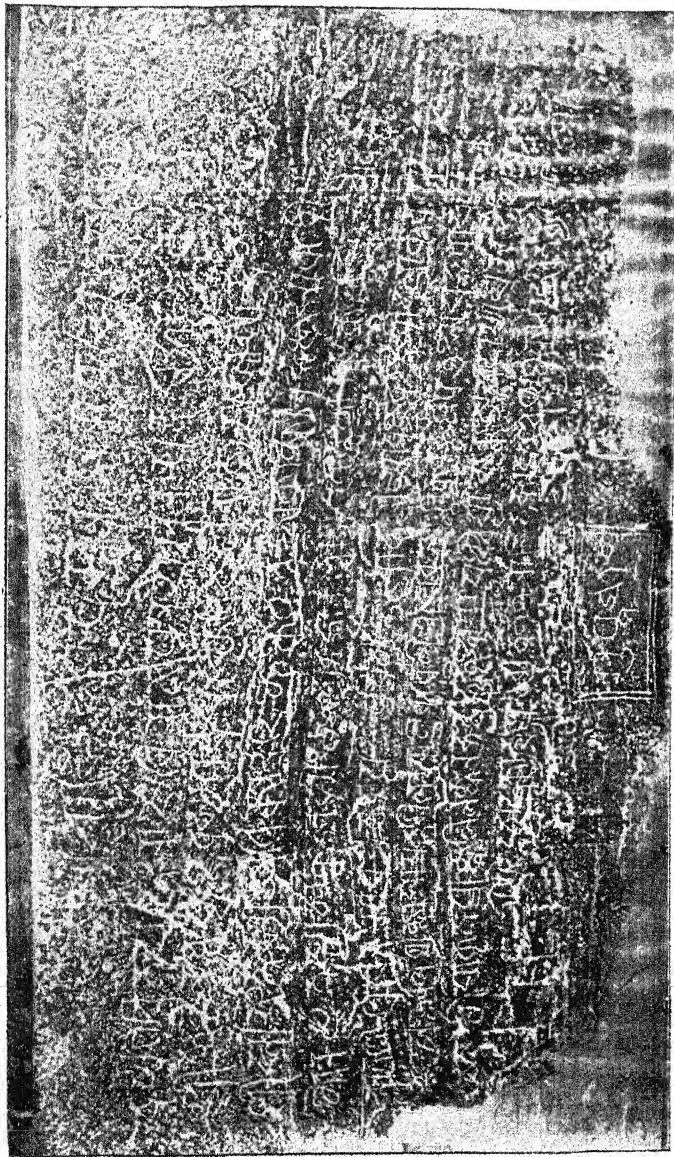
Bāṅger Jātiya Itihāsa, Rājanyakānda, p. 96,

Nāga rulers
in Assam.

king Ādisūra conferred on Kirti Nāga, a Kāyastha of the Nāga dynasty, the rulership of the Kirāta hill and made him a principal feudatory chief. Kirti Nāga worshipped the god Siva and was blessed with two sons Suvrisha and Jayavrisha, who bore the symbol of the Nāga. Suvrisha associated himself with the Kirātas and his descendants came to be known as the Pāhāriyā Nāgās. They were amalgamated with the Kirātas on account of their associations with them and following their manners and customs. Jayavrisha lived among his own folk and came to be known as 'Samājapati' 'or master of his society.'¹⁸ Though the power of the Nāga dynasty lasted long in Assam yet it does not appear that this line enjoyed the rule of Kāmarūpa for any considerable time. From the copper-plate inscription of Vanamāladeva we learn that 'in the line of Bhagadatta there flourished (as Sri Hari-sha's son) a wonderful King Prālammbha by name who was lord of Prāgijyotisha and was the destroyer of his enemies. His feet were lighted by the ray of the gems on the diadem of princes. All the quarters were beautified by him on account of connexion with the previous rulers through merit.'¹⁹ 'He had a queen of agreeable disposition called Sri Jivadā. She bore Harjara-varman the best of the Kings. His feet were worshipped by the head of the Kings and he was embraced by Lakshmi herself. He was like

Prālammbha.

18. Bānger Jātīya Itihāsa, Rājanyakāṇḍa, p. 238-239.
19. "तस्यान्वयेऽसूतं चित्तिपालनौलिमाणिक्यरोचिःस्तु रितान्निष्ठं पौडः ।
प्रागज्योतिषे शः चतदैरिवीरः प्रालम्ब इत्यङ्कित-नामधेयः ।
स पूर्व्वेन्दुपति-गुण-सम्बन्धौघ-रागासुरक्षितदिग्गन्तः ॥"
Copper-plate grant of Vanamāladeva, slokas 9-11



The facsimile of the Tezpur rock Inscriptions of Harjara Varmā
(1/16th of the original)

The Tezpur Rock-inscription of Harjara Varman

(Transcript)

Line. 1. ॐ स्वस्ति हारुणेश्वर पुरावस्थित स्वमुजयल (पद)

L. 2. हर्ष गवित महाराजाधिराज परमेश्वर परमभट्टराज श्रीवाराह

L. 3. श्री हर्यरुच्यर्षदेवस्य बर्द्धमान विजयराज्ये महासामन्त सेनामन्त

L. 4. श्री सुचित्तस्य अधिकार दिने कैत्रर्से नौदुति अश्वत्थ साधनी

L. 5. नौरुज तस्य नाकजोसीमुख्य व्यवहारश्चोद्भूत तत्र नौरुजकः हि तत्रवित्त

L. 6.

L. 7. इत्येते बलाध्यक्ष सप्तत शिलाश्रुतक वलेया पंचकुल संकरभटपुत्र सोमदेवाद्यः चतु

L. 8. दिक् सीमाकृत प्राकसलिल तारुमह भूमिमोग पश्चिमां नेकजोत गम्यां भवरभूमि शतरपर्वतात्

L. 9. यः च्यवनं करोति तस्य पंच बुटिकां गृहीतव्यमिति

L. 10

गुप्त ५१०

Judhisthira in religious discourses, like Bhīma among the enemies and like Jishnu in battle.²⁰ From the evidence given above it seems that Prālabha and his son Harjara re-established the glory of their ancestors. During their ascendancy the Pālas of Magadha gradually made themselves masters of the whole Gauḍa. We learn from the Bhagalpur-plate of Nārāyaṇa Pāla 'that at the command of Deva Pāla his younger brother Jaya Pāla launched upon a career of conquest. Hearing of his very name the lord of Utkala was struck with terror and fled from his capital. The ruler of Prāgyotisha too on hearing of Jaya Pāla's commands dropped all questions relating to warfare and lived very happily all his life enjoying the company of his relatives.'²¹

Harjara.

From the above inscription it seems the king of Kāmarūpa had either made a treaty with the Pālas of Magadha or was their ally. The first portion of the Tejpur-rock inscription of Harjara Varman bearing 510 of the Gupta era runs as follows :—

'May the reign of His Most Gracious Majesty Harjara Varmādeva be a glorious one.'

As in the above inscription Harjara has been given the title of "overlord" (परमेश्वर) and "great king" (परममहाराज) it seems that he was a mighty ruler and that he exercised control over some

20. श्रीजीवदेति स'ज्ञा राज्ञी हृदयानुगाभवत्तस्य
तस्यान्तस्य तु राज्ञः सुतोभवद्भूपतिरोर्जिताङ्गियुगः ।
श्रीहर्जरो हृषीकेशश्चिवा स्वयं स सप्तपदः ॥
धर्मप्रवादेषु युधिष्ठिरो यो भीमोर्विशो समरे च जिष्णुः ।"

Copperplate grant of Vanlamādeva.

21. Vide Gauḍa-Lekhamāla, p. 58, 66.

subordinate princes. But the insertion of '510 Gupta era' in his inscription conclusively proves that the supremacy of the Guptas had long been acknowledged in Kāmarupa and that Harjara himself acknowledged it too. For on the year 510 of the Gupta era given in his inscription it is evident that he had been reigning over the whole of Assam in 829—30 A.D. His capital was at Hārappesvara (probably near modern Tejpur). From the subsequent inscriptions it appears that the descendant of Harjara ruled long the kingdom of Kāmarupa from this place. In and about the town of Tejpur ancient buildings excavated in rocks and vast ruins of temples bearing testimony to the architectural skill of the ancient days keep alive to this day the memory of its departed greatness and prosperity.

Vanamāla-
deva.

Harjara had a son Vanamāladeva by name by his chief queen Tārā Devī. From the account given in his inscription it seems that he too was a very mighty ruler and was virtuous and generous. Many Kings had to bow to his authority and he had conquered many powerful enemies. 'He acquired great fame by rebuilding the temple of Hāṭakesvara Siva which was high as a peak of the Himālayas and for the maintenance of which grant were made of villages, subjects, elephants and dancing girls.'²²

The inscription in question contains the following couplet about his name :—

22. "प्राशियाचलशङ्कतुङ्गमनुलयामिभवेय्याजने-

युक्तं हाटकगुहिनः चितिशुभा भक्त्या नवं चक्रुः ॥"

Vide Rangpur Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā Vol. ix. pp. 25 and 30.

'As if the creator had given him the name of Vanamāla for his fitness for the sovereignty of the earth up to the end of the forests on the seashore'.²³

We learn from the copper-plate inscription of Balavarmā that Vanamāladeva built rows of palatial buildings. These structures were simply astonishing and contained a number of chambers decorated with paintings.²⁴

Vanamāla-
deva

Vanamāladeva had issued his copper-plate inscription making a grant of the villa of Atisūravātaka on the western bank of the river Trisrotā to a Vedic scholar Indaka who was the son of a Brāhmana called Bhijjāta belonging to the Sāṇḍilya gotra.

From this inscription it is clear that the territories of Vanamāla extended to the western bank of the river Trisrotā (modern Tista) comprising the modern Rangpur district and that the Palas had not as yet established their rule in those parts. The following is the English rendering of a few lines from the copper-plate inscription of Balavarmā of this line—

"As the moon arose from the Kshiroda sea, so Vanamāladeva too, had a son named Śrī Jayamāladeva born to him. His fame as white as the jasmine and the moon spreads steadily. The noble and heroic king Vanamāla who had

Jayamāladev

23. "जलमिक्षितवनसालासीमावधिमिदिनीपतितस्य ।

योग्य इति नाम धाता चक्रे वनसाल इति यस्य ॥"

Copperplate grant of Vanamāladeva,

Vide Rangpur Sahitya Parishad Patrika, Vol. IX, p. 25.

24. "धेनातुलापि सनुला जगति विशालापि मूरिकृतशला ।

पंक्तिः प्रासादानामकृतविचित्रापि सचिदाः ॥"

Vide Sahitya Parishad Patrika, Vol. XVII, pp. 118.

Balavarmā

eyes like the lotus flower, seeing that his gentle son had arrived at manhood gave unto him the royal umbrella white as the moon and having a couple of chowries attached to it and incorporated his self in the essence of the god Mahādeva by observing the vow of fasting. King Viravāhu, when invested with royalty, married a damsel called Ambā who was his match in respect of family, personal charms and age. Skilled in application, he begot on her, like fire in the wood Arāzi, a son of the name of Balavarmā who was noble, famous and endowed with all the qualities. After some days that king who was like a pillar on the battle-field contracted, through irony of fate, a disease that could not be cured by the physicians. Thinking that the world is hollow and that the human-life is transitory like a drop of water, he, on an auspicious day, placed his son resembling a young lion on the throne with due rites. Balavarmā too had established himself in the capital of his grand-father on the bank of the Lohitya having vanquished his enemies.”²⁵

25. “तस्यात्मजः श्रीजयसावदेवः, श्रीराज्जु राशेरिव शीतरश्मिः ।

बभूव वस्त्राखडितं सन्नि यशसि कुन्दे नृसप्तप्रभाणि ॥ १५

स श्रीराज्जु वसमाखोऽपि राजा राजोवल्लोचनः ।

अवेद्या विनयोपेतं तनुजं प्राप्तयौवनम् ॥ १६

दत्तं शशधरधवलं चामरयुगलान्वितं संप्रदायास्मै ।

अनशनविभिन्ना वीरसेजसि साहस्यरे खीनः ॥ १७

प्राप्तरेजेन तेनोद्ग राजा श्रीवीरबाहुना ।

कुलेन कान्त्या वयसा अन्त्यानामात्मनश्चमा ॥ १८

तेनोद्गदि वस्त्रासरण्याविन पावकः प्रयोगविदा ।

बलवन्मोति प्रजितः श्रीनचनयस्यसयुगयुक्तः ॥ १९

The translators of the above inscription have described Balavarmā as the son of Viravāhu who also has been called the son of Jayamāla. But from a perusal of the whole of it, it seems that Viravāhu was but a second name of Jayamāla and that Balavarmā was Jayamāla's son.

Like Vanamāla, Balavarmā also issued this copper-plate inscription from Hārūppesvara making a grant of 4000 measures of paddy-producing land in Dijinnavishaya in Dakshinakūla to the Vedic student Śrutidhara, son of Devadhara and grandson of Mālādhara belonging to the Kāṇva Sākhā and the gotra of Kapila when the latter had returned from his preceptor's house after finishing his Vedic study.

Most probably the royal authority slipped from the hand of this line after Balavarmā's death. Of all the copper-plate inscriptions discovered from Kāmarūpa up to this date, those of Ratnapāladeva deserve mention.

गच्छति तिष्ठति काले स कदाचित् कर्मणाम् विपाकवशात् ।

राजा राजाभिभूते लज्जितमिवशा बन्धुभिः ॥ २१

निःसारं संसारं जलजलजलोत्पन्नं जौहितं पुंसां ।

विगणय्य वीरवाहुः क्षातव्यमचित्तयच्छेदम् ॥ २२

अत पुण्ये ऽहनि वृषतिस्तनयस्तुदयवियङ्गं विधिवत् ।

केशरि-किशोरसदृशं सिंहासनमौजितामयम् ॥ २३

तदन्तरमधिगम्य प्राजा तद्राजसाम्राज्यमिव बद्धिः ।

वल्लवन्मपि दिदीपे प्रोत्सारितसक्तवरिपुतिमिरः ॥ २४

जम्बवज्जयकरिकुम्भस्यलितोष्णं रमणहारिधिस्य ।

लौहस्य समीपे तदेव पैतामहं कटकां ॥ २५

Nowgong Copperplate grant of Balavarmadeva.

Two such inscriptions of Ratnapāladeva have been found, one entire and the other broken. From the second inscription we learn that like Balavarmā, Ratnapāla also described himself as belonging to the line of Bhagadatta. The following is the English rendering of a portion of it :—

Tyāgasiṅha

“Sālastambha, the lord of the Mlechchhas, took according to the rule obtaining among the kings, the kingdom of the rulers of Naraka's line who had exercised sovereign sway from generation to generation. In his line there flourished Vighraha-stambha and other famous kings numbering twenty. The twenty-first king of this line, the illustrious Tyāgasiṅha died without issue. His subjects thought that they were in need of a king of Naraka's line and made Brahma-pāla, who was strong enough to bear the burden of royalty, their king, he having kinship with that line.”²⁶

It may seem from the above grant that Tyāga Siṅha was the twenty-first king of Sālastambha's line. In the account that has been given before in pursuance of the grants of Vana-

26. “एवं वंशक्रमेण विविनेष निखिलां भुज्जतां नारकाणां
राजां च च्छादिनाथो विविचलनदशादेव जयाह राज्यं ।
शाक्यस्तथः क्रमेणापि हि नरपतयो विगृह्यन्त्यमुखाः
विष्णुताः स'बभूवु दिगुयितदशता स'ख्यया स'विभिन्नाः ॥ २
निर्देशं नृपसैनिकसितितलं श्रीत्यागसि'हामिध'
तेषां बीज्य हिं गतं पुनरहो भीमो हि नो युज्यते ।
स्वामीति प्रविचिन्ता तत्पुत्रतयो क्षुमाररसाद्यलं
स्वागत्यात् परिचक्रिरे नरपतिं श्रीनरकापालं हि यं ॥” १०

Copperplate grant of Ratnapāladeva, dated 25th year.

māladeva and Balavarmā, we have got eleven kings in all beginning with Sālastambha and ending with Balavarmā. If we count from Pushyavarmā (the first Varmā king according to the grant of Bhāskaravarmā) down to Balavarmā we get twenty-three generations of kings. Under these circumstances we fail to understand how Tyāga Siṅha can be the twenty-first in descent from Sālastambha. Hence the conclusion is irresistible that either the branch of Sālastambha's line to which Tyāga Siṅha belonged reigned in a different place contemporaneously with their kinsmen the Varmā kings, he (Tyāgasiṅha) being the twenty-first of the line, or the writer of the grant had omitted two or three kings counting from Pushyavarmā. We are of opinion that during the rule of the Varmā dynasty, the Siṅha dynasty had been reigning elsewhere in a subordinate capacity and that Tyāga Siṅha of this line made himself master of Prāgiyotisha after Balavarmā's death.

Brahmapāla

'Brahmapāla was a mighty hero. Hearing his very name the enemies fled in all directions. His queen Kuladevi bore him a noble son called Ratnapāla. In his copper-plate grant it is recorded that 'Brahmapāla passed away placing on his throne his son who was the sun-god of the lotus of the line of Naraka. In his war with the Sakas he was like the strong-built thunderbolt. To the king of Gurjara he was like fever. He was to the indomitable lord of Gauḍa what is a disease to the elephant. He was like bitumen to the mountain of the lord of Kerala. He was a terror to the rulers of the Bāhikas and the Tāikas. To the Deccan kings he was like consumption. He lived in the kingdom of Prāgiyotisha

at the city of Durjaya beautifully situated on the Lohitya'.²⁷

Ratnapāla

From the above description of Ratnapāla it will appear that he too was a heroic monarch. The Sakas, the kings of Gurjara, Gauḍa, Kerala and the chief of the Bāhikas and the Tais and the ruler of the Deccan were vanquished by him. We can not call this account a poetic fiction. A terrible revolution passed over the kingdom of Gauḍa during the reigns of Brahmapāla and Ratnapāla. That was a time when the Saka-senās were spreading their power. The Rāstrakūṭa king of the Deccan had just inflicted a defeat on the king of Gurjara. Narasiṅha, the principal feudatory chief of the Rāstrakūṭa king, had even pursued Mahipāla the lord of Gurjara up to the mouth of the Ganges. Shortly after this, Yasovarmā, the Chandella king, conquered the rulers of Gauḍa, Kosala, Mithilā, Gurjara and other countries. About this time the Kāmbojas living near Gurjara and Lāṭa occupied northern Bengal. At the advent of these invaders, Gopāla the second, the king of Gauḍa, fled to the Himālayas to save his life. It was an unsettled time for Gauḍa. Most probably the king of Kerala too had appeared on the borders of the country. On the east also Kāma-

27. “यस्य शकस्रीडाशनि-ददपक्षरेण गुर्जरप्रधिराज-प्रज्वरेण दुर्जयः-
गौडो नृ-हस्तिवृट्पाकलीन केरलीशस्य-शिलाजतुना बाहिक-वाहकानककारिणा
दाक्षिणात्य-लोथिपति-राजध्वज्या लोहितलोथिना विरालनाभं माननोद्य-
मनिकमनकपतिसाध्यानाम् यथायाभिधानं प्रागुज्योतिषेषु दुर्जयात्य-
पुरसञ्चवासः।”

Copperplate grant of Ratnapāladeva, dated 25th year

rûpa was exposed to attack by the Bāhikas and Tāis. It has been said in connexion with the descriptions of the Kimmerians that this dynasty sprang from the Bāhlikas.²⁸ It is probable that these were the Bāhikas and that the Tāis have been mentioned with them on account of their proximity. The Ahoms formed one of the branches of these ancient Tāis.²⁹

It appears that Ratnapāla of Kāmarûpa was able to save his kingdom from so many invaders who had a longing eye on the country. His copper-plate grant hints at an unsuccessful invasion of the above mentioned invaders. Two copper-plate grants of Ratnapāla have been published. One of them records the gift of land in the 25th year to Viradatta, son of the Ahi-tāgni Brāhmaṇa Gaṅgādatta and grand-son of Devadatta of the Kāṇva Sākha and the gotra of Parāsara. The other was issued in the 26th year on the occasion of granting land to Kāmadēva, son of Vāsudeva and grandson of Bhaṭṭa Baladeva of the Kāṇva branch and the Gotra of Bharadvāja. We get the following information from the copper-plate grant of Indrapāla—

“Purandarapāla, the son of Ratnapāla who filled the earth with white-washed temples of the god Siva, the houses of the Brāhmaṇas learned in the Vedas with all sorts of wealth, the yards of the houses of sacrifice with sacrificial posts, the whole sky with the sacrificial smoke and all the quarters with monuments of victory, was of noble fame, charitable,

Purandara-
pāla

28. See pages 106–110 of this book.

29. Gait's History of Assam, p. 67.

Indrapāla.

capable of enjoyment, pure, versed in the fine arts, heroic and a good poet.”³⁰ He had for his wife the princess Durlabhā who was above the reach of the people and who belonged to the royal family of Prāchī that was conquered by the strong hand of Parasurāma. From this couple Indrapāla was born. He was the lamp of the east and was the foremost of the vanquisher of the enemies, of the continent, the politicians and men of character.”³¹ In his copper-plate grant the seventeenth Sloka is utterly illegible and therefore we have no definite information with regard to the acquisition of his sovereignty. But it seems that Ratnapāla himself had installed him as Yuvarāja (heir-apparent) fearing that Purandarapāla being dead and gone he might not get the kingdom after his demise. This inference is drawn from the following lines in the inscription in question—

30. “ससम्बद्धा वसुधा-मुपाधवलितैः शम्भुप्रतिष्ठास्यदे
येष्व श्रीविद्यमन्दिराणि विभटैर्नामप्रकारेण ।
रूपैर्देवैश्चन्द्राङ्गणानि हविषां पुमैर्न भोग्यस्य
यामारिषुभिरर्णवाण्युविजयलक्ष्मैश्च सर्वैः दिशः ॥
आसीदुदारकौर्चिर् दाता भोक्ता शक्तिः कलाकुशलः ।
तस्य पुरन्दरपालः सतुः शरश्च सुकविश्च ॥”

Copperplate grant of Indrapāla,—Slokas 10-11.

Vide Rangpur Sāhitya Parishad Patrika, Vol VII. p. 89.

31. “जानदप्राप्तुजविक्रमाणि तप्राजाराजावृषं शम्भुनाम् ।

दुर्लभमिति स तु लोके दुर्लभां प्राप्य सम्यग्भवत् कलववान् ॥ १३

देवः प्राचीप्रदीपः प्रकटवसुमतिमण्डनः स्तुष्टितारि-

जातिसाध्यान् जितात्मा नयवितयवतामयश्रीरिन्द्रपादः ।”

Copperplate grant of Indrapāla, Slokas, 12, 15.

"He himself had invested with royalty the pure hearted grandson whose father had gone up to heaven with his body saturated with fame".³²

By this grant Indrapāla had in the 8th year of his reign granted land in Uttarakūla to Desapāla who was accomplished with many qualities and who was the son of Savarapāla and the grand-son of Haripāla and a follower of the Yajurveda.

It is not definitely known who succeeded Indrapāla. The copper-plate grant of Dharmapāla was discovered subsequently. In it Brahmapāla has been described as the ancestor of Dharmapāla. It also says that his father was called Harshapāla and that his grand-father Gopāla. Hence, as Indrapāla and Dharmapāla belonged to the same family and as the script of this copperplate has been proved to be later than that of the above copper-plate inscription, we may assume in the absence of contemporary evidence to the contrary that Gopāla succeeded Indrapāla on the throne of Kāmarūpa. The following description is taken from the copper-plate grant of Dharmapāla :—

"In his (Brahmapāla's) family there was a king called Gopāla who was skilled in politics and had deep regard for religion. His valour burnt the enemies as fire burns a forest. That famous and spirited king had a wife of the name of Nayanā of noble reputation. She bore a son the illustrious Harshapāla who was like the lamp of the Pāla line and whose

Gopāla

Harshapāla

32. "सर्गे गते पितरि वसु ब्रह्मशरीरे पीवसु पूतमनस

न युष्मानुदयमल्पितं स्वयमभून्निरालम्बणीम् ॥"

Dharmapāla

reputation spread over the three worlds. His son was Dharmapāla, whose praise was sung by the whole world and who was accomplished with all the qualities and whose heart was set on piety alone. The goddess Sarasvati attracted as it were by the fragrance of his face which resembled a lotus flower settled for ever on it. This grant was made by Dharmapāla who was the sun of the lotus of the Pāla-line, who was at the head of the circle of the poets, who cultivated the fine arts, who was endowed with all qualities and who possessed spotless reputation."³³.

From the above account it will appear that Gopāla had vanquished his enemies and had ruled the kingdom of Kāmarūpa like a just and virtuous monarch. His son Harshapāla too was renowned every where for his deeds of fame. Dharmapāla was an accomplished and virtuous king. He was versed in all the fine arts and was a great poet too. The inscription on his copper-plate grant was composed by Aniruddha. But the seventh stanza of it seems

33. "तद्वंशे रूपतिर्बभूव नयवान् धर्मो निबद्धादरः

श्रीगोपाल इति प्रतापदहनपु उद्दिष्टकाननः ॥ ४

पत्नी वभूव वृषतेनयनाभिधाना तस्य प्रसिद्धमहसो मङ्गनीयकौर्तिः ।

अभ्यामजायत जगत्प्रद्युम्नकौर्तिः श्रीहर्षपाल इति पालकुलप्रदौपः ॥ ५

तस्मान्नृपो भुवनगीतगुणामिरामो धर्मो कदत्तद्वयोऽजनि धर्मपालः ।

दक्षिन् सुखान्मुकुटकोशरजोमिराम लुब्धे च बाग् भगवतो विरमधुवाह ॥ ६

पालान्वयान्धुजरविः कविचक्रवालचूडामणिः कलितसर्व्यकलाकलापः ।

श्रीधर्मपालगुपति गुप्तरक्षसिन्धुरितां प्रशस्तिनकरोदवदातकौर्तिः ॥ ८

Copperplate grant of Dharmapāla,

Vide Rangpur Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā, Vol. X. pp. 73-74.

to have been from the pen of the king himself. In this stanza the royal poet says :—

“Hear you O future kings these words of the king Dharmapāla—Pride on account of the kingdom which is transitory like the flash of lightning should be given up but never piety which brings intense happiness.”³⁴

Dharmapāla had given the grant in question on the occasion of making a gift of land to the great Brāhmana Madhusūdana, son of Sutanu who was ever inclined to give away all he possessed, grandson of Bhāsvara who was well-versed in Mīmāṃsā and Politics and knew the Vedas as well as the Smritis, and great grandson of the Yajurvedi Brāhmana Naravāhana of the Sūramaudgalya-gotra and the Mādhyandina branch. This grant contains no writing indicating the year of the reign of the king who issued it. But Mr. Jenkins, the agent of the then Governor-General, when sending the grant of Vanamāladeva to the Asiatic Society, made mention of a grant of Dharmapāla bearing the mark “36.”³⁵ From this we conclude that Dharmapāla reigned for at least thirtysix years.

Dharmapāla

34. “श्रीधर्मापालमूनेः प्रकृतैति यूयम्
विद्युच्छटाक्षपलराजास्यप्राप्तमान-
सालायाः कदाचिदपि तिष्ठसुखी न चर्कः ॥”

35. “A similar grant of two plates was lately produced by a Brahmin in the Kamrupa Courts.....it was a Brahmanottar by Dharmapala in the year 36 without any mention of what era to these Brahmins and detailed the boundaries of the grant. That inscription was not very legible, the letters in many places being much rubbed,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1840.

Sir E. A. Gait thus writes about Dharmapāla :—

“A Kshatriya named Dharmapāla, it is said, came from the west and founded a kingdom. He made his capital west of Gauhāṭī and attracted thither a number of Brāhmanas and other high-caste Hindus from Upper India. The sage Kendu Kulāi is said to have lived in his reign. He was succeeded in turn by Padma Nārāyana, Chandra Nārāyana and others ending with Rāmachandra whose capital was at Ratnapur in the Majuli. This place is mentioned in the old legends as the capital of various kings, amongst others of Kusāranya, son of Harabinda who is said in the Dipika-chhanda to have ruled over Gauḍa, Kāmarūpa and Jaintia ; it is reported to have been washed away owing to a change in the course of the Brahmaputra river.”³⁶

It does not seem that the above description is based on any historical truth. Dharmapāla had not come from any foreign country ; nor did he or any of his predecessors of the Mlechchha line of Naraka call himself a Kshatriya. The petty vassal kings of Assam reigning in different places in the country might have called themselves so in order to dignify their families. This seems to have been at the root of such a tradition.

On the other hand there is a tradition current in Rangpur that Dharmapāla reigned in a place called Dharmapura within the jurisdiction of the police-station Dimlā in the District of Rangpur. Still the ruins of the fort of Dharmapāla are shewn by the people to the

curious traveller. He had married Vanamālā, the sister of Mayanāmatī, the queen of Mānikchandra. After the death of Mānikchandra he took possession of his kingdom. The queen Mayanāmatī formed a conspiracy with the ministers in order to install her son Gopichandra on the throne of his father and declared war against Dharmapāla. A terrible battle was fought on the bank of the Tistā in which Dharmapāla was defeated. The queen Mayanāmatī then restored the kingdom of her husband and placed her son on the throne of it. We had through mistake thought this Dharmapāla to be the king of Daṇḍabhukti.³⁷ This mistake was detected after the publication of the newly discovered copper-plate grant of Dharmapāla. Really Dharmapāla of Kāmarūpa and Dharmapāla of Daṇḍabhukti were different persons.

Mayanāmatī

Sir E. A. Gait writes thus in another place :—

“In Glazier’s report on Rangpur, Dharmapāla is mentioned as the founder of a dynasty. It is said that he was succeeded by his son Bhabachandra, whose successor was the last of the line. The remains of a fortified city which even now retains the name of Dharmapāla are still to be seen in Rangpur and in the Baghdwar pargana of the same district are the ruins of Udayapura, the city of Udaya or Bhava.”³⁸

It has been mentioned before that the rule of the kings of Kāmarūpa extended to the western bank of the river Tistā i.e. up to the modern district of Rangpur. The earlier kings of the

37. Banger Jātiya, Itihās, Rājanyakānda, p. 179-181

38. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1892, p. 278.

country from Harjaravarmā to Valavarmā had their capital at Hāruppervara (modern Tejpura) and the later kings down to Indrapāla ruled the kingdom from Durjayāpura or the city of Durjayā near modern Gauhati. But in the copper-plate grant of Dharmapāla there is no mention of any such capital. It clearly states that he became king at Kāmarūpapura. The site of this place has not as yet been ascertained. The word "Kāmarūpapura" has been corrupted into 'Kāṅgur' in the Dharmamaṅgalas of Bengal and into 'Kāmrū' in the history of the Muhammadan period.

Kāmarūpa-
pura
or
Kāṅgura.

Kāmarūpapura or Kāṅgur is situated on the western side of Gauhati. This may probably be at the root of the tradition that Dharmapāla made his capital west of Gauhati.

We understand clearly from a perusal of the copper-plate grants of the kings of the Naraka dynasty that these kings were gradually removing their capital towards the west. This change of capital might be due to either of the two causes, viz (1) that the Shān and other Non-aryan tribes in the east became very powerful and were threatening the capital, (2) that in the west the kingdom of Gauḍa was being subjected to repeated invasions by the kings of different places in India. The kings of Kāmarūpa seems to have been compelled to remove their capital towards the west in order to save their kingdom from the attack of these invading armies. From what we know of the history of Kāmarūpa, we are led to believe that Dharmapāla was the last powerful king of the country belonging to the dynasty of Naraka. The defeat he sustained at the hands of the queen

Mayanāmati on the banks of the Tistā seems to have dealt the deathblow to the power of this line. Really from what the current tradition says about his son Udayapāla or Bhavachandra we cannot regard him as a powerful king of this dynasty. We think that the sovereignty of the country slipped from the hands of the Naraka dynasty during the time of the king Bhavachandra and his minister Gavachandra.

From the above accounts of the kings of the Naraka line it will appear that these Mlechchha kings, though preserving some of their customs, were gradually coming under the influence of the Vedic Brāhmanas. The consequence of this was that their ancient manners and customs were being gradually modified. Sir Gait makes the following observation in this connection:—

Influence of
the Vedic
Brāhmanas.

“From the names of these Mlechchha kings it may be concluded that they, like so many of their successors, were converted to Hinduism as soon as they became worthy of the notice of the local Brāhmana priests.”³⁹

Tradition says that these Mlechchha kings had brought to Kāmarūpa Chaturvedi Brāhmanās belonging to different gotras who settled in the country. But in all the seven copper-plate grants of these monarchs, discovered up to this date, mention is only made of the Yajurvedi Brāhmanas belonging to the gotras of Sāṇḍilya, Kāpila, Bharadvāja, Parāsara, Kāsyapa, and Suramaudgalya.

From this it will appear that only the Yajurvedi Brāhmanas were able to establish

Influence of
the original
Mlechchha
language.

their influence in Kāmarūpa during the rule of the Naraka dynasty. Though, through the efforts of these Brāhmanas, Sanskrit was to some extent cultured in the country, yet they could not withstand the influence of the original Mlechchha language. The following Mlechchha words have been taken from the rock-inscription of Harjaravarmā at Tezpur and the copper-plate grants of the kings of this line down to Dharmapāla.

हाह्व, नोक, जोस,* नौकवा, छमिकाकछि,† दिखिना, हेड्सिवा, कोप्पा, गोसन्तार, दिद्देस,‡ नौकि, चंदेनौकि, दियम्बार,§ हाप्योम, कोष्ठमाक्खियान,¶ कुन्तवित, कमकुति, लाक्खवा, दिग्-जुम्मा (नदी),§ दिग्डोल, डेव्वरी, सोव्वडि, खग्ग, चम्मम्भ, जौगल,§ ने १, वादिज्जुरतिभूडी, अभंच, हकूक, थैसाडोन्नि, चक्कोजान, पारनि, दिजमक्का, नोकनडागा ।

It is hard to find out the meaning of these words. We leave this to be dealt with by the linguists.

The fall of the Naraka dynasty synchronised with the rise of the Kāyasthas in Kāmarūpa which will be taken up in the next chapter.

* Tezpur Rock-Inscription of Harjara Varman :

Vide Journal of B. & O. Research Society, 1920.

† Copperplate grant of Vanamāladeva :

Vide Rangpur Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā, Vol. IX. p. 27.

‡ Copperplate grant of Balavarmadeva :

Vide Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā, Vol. XII. p. 120-121.

§ Copperplate grant of Ratnapāla :

Vide Rangpur Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā Vol. X. p. 22-24.

§ Copperplate grant of Indra-pāla :

Vide Rangpur Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā, Vol. VII. p. 91.

¶ Copperplate grant of Dharmapāla :

Vide Rangpur Sāhitya Parishad Patrikā, Vol. X. p. 78.

A rough Chronology of the Mlechchha kings
of Kāmarupa.

	Name of Kings	Capital	Approximate date of their reigns.
1.	Pushya-Varman		275-300 A.D.
2.	Samudra-Varman		300-340 „
3.	Bala-Varman		340-370 „
4.	Kalyāna-Varman		370-400 „
5.	Ganapati-Varman		400-430 „
6.	Mahendra-Varman		430-460 „
7.	Nārāyaṇa-Varman		460-490 „
8.	Mahābhūta-Varman		490-520 „
9.	Chandramukha- Varman		520-550 „
10.	Sthita-Varman		550-575 „
11.	Susthita-Varman		575-600 „
12.	Supratishthita- Varman		600-620 „
13.	Kumāra Bhāskara- Varman		620-650 „
14.	Sāla-Stambha		655-675 „
15.	Vigraha-Stambha		675-695 „
16.	Palaka-Stambha		695-720 „

	Name of Kings	Capital	Approximate date of their reigns.
17.	Vijaya-Stambha		720-750 A.D.
18.	Sri Harisha (Sri Harshadeva)		755-780 „
19.	Pralambha		780-800 „
20.	Harjara-Varman	Hāruppes- vara	800-830 „
21.	Vanamāla „	„	830-865 „
22.	Jayamala „(Viravāhu)	„	865-890 „
23.	Bala-Varman II.	„	890-915 „
24.	Tyāga-Simha	„	915-930 „
25.	Brahma-pāla	Durjayapur	930-960 „
26.	Ratnapāla	„	960-990 „
27.	Indrapāla	„	990-1010 „
28.	Gopāla	„	1010-1020 „
29.	Harsha-pāla	„	1020-1035 „
30.	Dharmapāla	Kāmarūpa- pura	1035-1075 „

CHAPTER III

The Rise of the Kāyasthas in Kāmarūpa

In this chapter we propose to deal with the rise of the Kāyasthas in Kāmarūpa.

From the grants of the Gupta emperors and contemporary inscriptions we learn that during their rule the offices of the Minister for Peace and War and the Chief Secretary were a monopoly in the hands of the Kāyasthas. In many cases these posts were hereditary.¹ Besides this the Kāyasthas in that age occupied in various places in India the highest posts in the state such as those of the Amātya (Minister), Rājasthāniya (Viceroy), Mahattara (Village-headman), Mālakriyāmātya (Councillor for household), Jyeshthādhikaranika (Chief judge or Magistrate), Mahākshapaṭalika (Chief-record-keeper) and so forth. There is plenty of evidence to show that in the sixth century of the Christian era the Kāyasthas had acquired a prominent position throughout the whole of Bengal. A few years back four copper-plate inscriptions issued by Mahārājādhirāja Dharmaditya, Mahārājādhirāja Gopachandra and Mahārājādhirāja Samāchāradeva were found in the district of Faridpur.² From these inscriptions it is clear that during the reign of these kings the high public posts described in them viz. those of the Uparika (उपरिक),

Position
of the
Kāyasthas
in ancient
India.

1. Indian Antiquary, Vol. V. p. 57.

2. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911, p. 50. and Banger Jātiya Itihās, Rājanyakānda, p. 41-50. For further information, vide Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XV, p. 129ff. containing fac-simile of five copper-plate grants of the early Gupta period (from 443-44 AD to 533-84 AD), recently discovered from the village Damodarpur in the District of Dinajpur.

the Adhikaranika (अधिकारणिक) the Vichārapati (विचारपति), the Mahattara (महत्तर), the Sāadhanika (साधनिक) and others were occupied by the Kāyasthas. As under these rulers most of the highest officials in the state were Kāyasthas we are led to believe that they themselves belonged to that caste. Mr. Pargitter, Ex-Judge, High-court, Calcutta, who deciphered and translated these inscriptions, speaks thus about the Kāyasthas :—

“The names of the *mahattaras* in this inscription do not appear to be genuine compound words in which the component parts depend on one another, such as Dharmāditya and Kulachandra in grant A (II. 2-4), but seem to consist merely of two separate words in juxtaposition. Hence we may with full propriety write them as Vatsa Kuṇḍa, Suchi Pālita, Vihita Ghosha, Priya Datta and Janārdana Kuṇḍa and perhaps Jiva Datta may be so treated. Hence it appears that in these names we have four of the caste-surnames which are common in Bengal now, viz Kuṇḍa (modern Kundu), Pālita, Ghosh and Datt. A caste surname *karanika* is mentioned (1. 15). *Karanika* is not classical Sanskrit, but is evidently a word formed from *karana* which was the name of a caste that had the occupation of writing, accounts, etc ; hence *karanika* apparently meant a member of this caste. The position of senior member of the Board was in grants B and C held by the then oldest Kāyastha named Naya Sena. As this grant is older than those, it is worthy of note that where as the modern name Kāyastha is mentioned in grants B and C, the name used in this older

Caste-surnames of
Bengal
Kāyastha
in 6th
Century A.D.

grant is *karanika*, a title which is not used now. Where a person's caste is mentioned, the surname is sometimes omitted, as in the case of the *karanikas*, for while one is named Naya Nāga (Nāg is another modern surname) the other is called simply Keshava (1. 15). It seems a fair inference that the second parts of these names were established as caste-surnames at the time of this inscription."³

These grants tell us that in the sixth century A.D. there were Kāyasthas with the family names of Ghosha, Datta, Chandra, Pālita, Kuṇḍa, Bhadra, Bhuti, Sena, Deva and so forth and that they were known as Kulavāra or Kulavara.

From this it is evident that the maṇḍalas of the districts in which these inscriptions have been found were under the rule of the Adhikaranikas. We learn from the inscriptions of Dharmāditya and Gopachandra that the senior member of the Board was an aged Kāyastha named Naya Sena. He is described as the head of the Adhikaranikas. Hence it is plain that these Adhikaranikas were Kāyasthas by caste.⁴

Sasāṅkadeva, the King of Karna-suvarṇa who was a Kshatrapa Kāyastha by birth flourished in the seventh century of the Christian era. Plentiful proofs are available of the ascendancy of the Kāyasthas throughout the length and breadth of Bengal during his reign. About this time the Kāyasthas of Rāḍha grew influential not only in Bengal but even in the whole of Orissa and far off

Influence
of the
Kāyastha
in Bengal
Orissa and
Central
India.

3. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911, p. 501.

4. Indian Antiquary for 1910, p. 200 and

Sambalpur. Through the grace of Sasāṅka-deva many Kāyasthas had established themselves in these parts. Some of his relatives were able through his help to extend their rule up to Central India. Of these chosen few the name of Sūrya Ghosha deserves mention. A stone-tablet in the museum at Nagpur contains records of his fame and power.⁵

Advent
of the
Kāyasthas
in Assam.

After the demise of Sasāṅkadeva the throne of Karna-suvarṇa was occupied for some time by Bhāskara Varmā, the king of Kāmarūpa, a fact which is proved by the copper-plate inscription of the latter. He seems to have been fully aware of the influence and skilfulness of the Kāyasthas of the country. He has been described as the king of Eastern India in the contemporary history of China. It seems probable that like the Gupta emperors he also employed the Brāhmanas in the Judicial Service and the Kāyasthas in the Executive Service. We think that the Brāhmanas and the Kāyasthas of Gauḍa settled in Kāmarūpa during his reign.

The Kāyastha Nāga dynasty in Assam.

The king Adisura flourished in the eighth century of the Christian era. The genealogical account of Vāchaspati Misra says that the rulers of Aṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Karnasurvarṇa and Kāmarupa having a member of heroic leaders in their army, Magadha, Mālava and Jāhṇava and other places were defeated by him.⁶

We learn from Kāśidāsa's 'Karana-varṇana' that Kīrti Nāga of the Saupāyana Gotra, who

5. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, for 1905, p. 609.

6. Banger Jātiya Itihāsa, Rājanyakānda, pp. 93.

belonged to the line of Karkoṭa, lived in the country of Gauḍa. Ādisūra came to know of his high birth and made him his principal feudatory chief and gave him the sovereignty of the Kirāta hill. His sons were Suvrisha and Jayavrisha. As Suvrisha had associated himself with the Kirātas, his descendants came to be known as the Pahārīā Nāgās. Jayavrisha ruled Kirāta hill for some time as Samājapati or head of the society. He had two sons called Phani Nāga and Mani Nāga. Mani Nāga went to Nepal and settled there.⁷ From this it is clear that Ādisura had not only defeated the king of Kāmarūpa but had also installed Kirti Nāga as his principal feudatory chief. It is recorded in the Assam Burānji that in the 4th century A.D. a dynasty called Nāga Sankara or Nāgākhyā reigned for about two hundred years at Pratāpgarh in Bisvanath.⁸

The Nāga
kings of the
Kirāt hill.

We are inclined to hold that the writer of the Burānji has described the dynasty of Kirti Nāga as the Nāgākhyā dynasty. The family of Kirti Nāga ruled Assam for a long time as is manifest from the account of Kāsīdāsa.

It has been said before that Kirti Nāga's son Jayavrisha and his son Phanindra were greatly honoured in their society on account of their matrimonial connections. His son Sarva Nāga and grandson Darpa Nāga embraced Buddhism.

7. Banger Jātiyā Itihās, Rajanyakānda, p. 238-234.

8. "Mention is also made of Nāgasankara or Nāgākhyā who flourished towards the end of the fourth century at Pratāpgarh in Bishnath. where the ruins of a fort attributed to him are still in existance, and four kings, Minanga, Gajanga, Srihanga and Mriganga ruled for two hundred years at Lohityapur."

Gait's History of Assam, p. 17.

Jayadhara

'Darpa Nāga had two sons, Abhayākara and Bhikshākara. Both married in the Deva family. Abhayākara had two sons by this wife who were called Jayadhara and Rakshākara. At that time there was terrible fighting in the North as well as in the South. Rakshākara fled to Mahāvana and thus saved his life. Jayadhara won victory in the conflict, established himself in the Nāga kingdom and grew famous. He won great honour by marrying his daughter in the Chakri or Chāki family of Vārendra. He had two sons Sridhara and Harihara. Sridhara died in the battle-field. Harihara went to the kingdom of Kuvacha or Koch and acquired eminence in the service of the State. Heruka and Vāsuki Nāga were his sons. Both of them conquered the land of Koṭi. Vāsuki settled in Kalinga, while Heruka ruled at Bānakoṭa. This place came to be called Nāgakotā on account of the ascendancy of the Nāgas.⁹

Heruka

Pasupati

'Heruka had two sons Bhūpati and Pasupati. Bhūpati went to the west. Pasupati became king at Bānakoṭa and became known as 'Bānarāja.' Ganapati Nāga was his son. He married a prince of the Pāla line. This marriage brought him high honours from the Pāla king but it lowered him in his own society. His son Sañkara Nāga extended his rule up to the kingdom of Kuvacha or Koch. By establishing matrimonial connections with

9 According to Kāśidāsa Nāgakot or Bānakot (now Bānagarh) was in the country of Koti. This country was called Kotivarsha during the rule of the Pāla Kings. Under the Musalmans it was called Pargana Deokot and in modern days it is known as the Pargana of Deokot in the District of Dinejpur. Umāvana or Mahāvana is its another name.

high Kāyastha families he had dignified himself in his own society. His son Devadatta Nāga was a mighty hero. He made Mahāvana his capital.¹⁰ He allied himself with the Pāla kings. He had two sons Rudra Nāga and Siva Nāga. They had nearly a lac of soldiers and had conquered many places. They were very popular in Northern Bengal. Siva Nāga had two sons, Karkoṭa and Jaṭādhara, both of whom have been described as virtuous and generous in the genealogical record. It was through their encouragement that Bhrīgu Nandi, Narahari and Murahara Deva were able to construct the Vārendra samāja defying such a mighty king as Ballāla Sena.¹¹

The Nāga
dynasty in
North
Bengal.

From the account of the dynasty given above, it is clear that the Nāga dynasty ruled in certain places of Assam from the eighth to the twelfth century. Before the time of Ballāla Sena and the formation of the Vārendra Kāyastha Samāja, they had established matrimonial connections with the principal Kāyastha families of Bengal and even with the royal house. Devadatta Nāga made Mahāvana his capital in the eleventh century and thus separated himself from the Kāmarupa Samāja. But still, as we learn from the Assam Buranji, some members of the Nāga dynasty ruled in subsequent times in some places of Kāmarupa in the capacity of feudatory princes. In the

10. We learn from the Rāmacharita of Sandhyākara Nandī, that during the reign of Rāmapāla, the king of Gauda, Mahāvana was the capital of the Nāga dynasty. They had driven away the Tunga family of the Rāstrakutas. Rāmapāla had conquered them.

11. Banger Jātiya Itihāsa, Bājanyakānda, pp. 238—243.

Assam Buranji mention is made of a very mighty king Ārimatta by name. He has been called the son of Rāmachandra and grandson of the Chhatrī King Jitāri. Rāmachandra married a Kāyastha princess Kamalakumārī or Chandraprabhā by name.¹² According to the Assam Buranji this princess belonged to the Nāgākhyā dynasty. Ārimatta ruled in Kāmarupa towards the end of the twelfth century. He has been called Rāyārideva in the grant of Vallabhadeva issued in the year 1107 of the Saka Era. It is evident that the Kāyastha Nāga dynasty also had been ruling in Assam about this time. Rāyārideva or Ārimatta was the son of a princess of this dynasty.

The Dāsa Dynasty.

Like the Nāga dynasty mentioned before, the Dāsa dynasty belonging to the Atri Gotra become, at one time, powerful in Kāmarūpa. The following account of this dynasty is taken from the "Vārendra Karana-Varnana", a work of Kāsīdāsa. According to this authority "an ancestor of this line occupied the post of the Mahattara in the country of Rādha on the bank of the Ganges. They were connected with the Nandi, the Sena and the Guha families and were held in respect among their caste-people. The first name available of this dynasty is Mañkha Dāsa. His fame had spread throughout the whole of Rādha. His son was called Tañka-pānī. On account of the machinations of the

12. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1835, p. 191.

Brāhmanas he had to leave his ancestral home and to seek refuge in the capital city of Pātālī. The Mahārāja Chakravarti gave him shelter and treated him honourably. He became a friend of the sovereign and was given the post of the Chief Secretary. On account of his high position, every body sought to creep into his good graces. His son Chakrapānī won high honours in the service of the State. He was like Vrihaspati in point of learning and intelligence, and had great respect for the Brāhmanas and the Sramanas. He was also noted as a great poet. He had two sons, Dhira Dāsa and Sūra Dāsa, both of whom were favourites of the sovereign. As ill-luck would have it, they incurred the displeasure of the Brāhmanas, as a result of which they had to leave the court of the ruler of Gauḍa and to settle in Varendra. They had taken immense wealth with them and were held in great respect in their Samāja. Sūra Dāsa was blessed with a son Sṛidhara by name. Sṛidhara had two sons, Bhūdhara and Gadādhara. Bhūdhara began to live in Rāḍha. His after-life was spent in Benares. Gadādhara lived in his paternal abode. He had a son Rājyadhara by name. Then there was a revolution in the kingdom of Gauḍa. Rājyadhara fled to the north and settled in Kuvacha with his relatives. Through the grace of the Goddess Kāmākhyā, he became King of the place. His son was Ārya Sṛidhara. He was honoured with the title of the Principal Feudatory Chief by the king of Kāṅgura (or Kāmarūpa). He won for himself great renown by defeating the Kānārā. His son was Dharādhara to whom also a son called Sūlapānī was born. He became

famous in Kuvacha by worshipping the god Pinākāpānī (or Siva). He was fortunate enough to have two noble sons called Pināka and Chakrapānī. Both of them defied the hero of Yadu's race. Chakrapānī went abroad. He had a son of the name of Devadhara who became renowned as the Prime-minister. He separated himself from the Samāja in Bengal.¹³ Pināka did not change his Samāja. Here his descendants are honoured every-where. His son Tañkapānī was counted as a great hero. With the help of the King of Gauḍa he won victory in battle and became famous both in Rāḍha and Gauḍa. He married the daughter of the minister. In this union the two families of Deva and Dāsa were linked to each other. This caused a great stir in the Samāja and the Kāyastha Samājas in the north and the south were united together. His son Ratnapānī won great glory, but was deprived of his sovereignty by the Mlechchhas. His son was Nara Dāsa who was highly respected in the Samāja. He came to the village of Bāñki. Nara Dāsa had two sons, Baṭu and Paṭu. Baṭu formed the Bangaja Samāja. Nara Dāsa's relatives and kinsmen were satisfied with him. He went to Nāgālaya with

13. In Banger Jatiya Itihās, Rājanyakanda, p. 221 the four lines of the original authority have through mistake been left out before the introduction of Tankapānī. These lines are quoted below:—

“চক্ৰপাণি দেশান্তর, পুত্র তার দেবধর
মহামাত্য বলিয়া সুখ্যাত ।
বঙ্গনাথের চাঞ্চ হইল, পিপাক সমাজে রইল,
তাহার বান্দা নরবীর আখ্যাত ।”

his friends Bhrigu and Murahara and there established the Varendra Kāyastha Samāja having cut off all connections with Ballālasena. Baṭu Dāsa went over to the side of Ballāla for which he was discarded by his father. But Ballālasena had honoured him with the post of the Principal Feudatory-Chief of Bengal. He had two sons called Sṛihari and Sṛidhara. Paṭu Dāsa was a wise man in his own Samāja. In the National Conference he acquired renown as "Varendra Chief." He did noble deeds with his brothers, one among whom was called Bhuvana, and died without issue leaving a brilliant record behind him.' ¹⁴

In the above accounts, the personage who has been called "Mahārāja Chakravarti" having his capital at Pāṭali is none but Dharmapāla himself. In the Tibetan book called the Bstan-hgyur Tañkapānī has been called 'Jyestha-Kāyastha Tañkadāsa' and his son Chakrapānī 'the great poet Chākādāsa'. Both the father and the son adorned the court of Dharmapāla, the ruler of Gauḍa. Both of them wrote many Sanskrit books, the Tibetan translations of which have been preserved in the Bstan-hgyur. Tañkapānī was the Chief-Secretary of Dharmapāla. In his old age, he renounced the world and became known as Mahā-siddhāchāryya. Chakrapānī's sons Dhīra Dāsa and Sūra Dāsa left Pāṭaliputra with immense wealth and settled in Varendra. Sura Dāsa's great-grand-son Rājyadhara became the king of Kuvacha. This place has been called 'Kuvācha' in the Padmapurāṇa, the Yoginitantra, and the ancient Buranjis of

Tanka Dāsa

Chākā Dāsa

Rājyadhara
as king of
Koch.

14. Vide Banger Jatiya Itihas, Rājanyakāṇḍa, pp. 120—122.

Assam. In *Tabakāt-i-Nāsiri* and other historical works of the Muhammadan period, it has been described as 'Kucha', and as 'Kubancha' in *Yadunandana's 'Dhākura'*. This place is now known as 'Koch Bihār.'

Troubles in
North
Bengal.

During Rājyadhara's time, there was a revolution in Gauḍa. Then Rājyapāla I of the Pāla dynasty was reigning. The approximate date of his death is 950 A.D. His weak son Gopāla II succeeded him. During his reign the country was invaded by the Chandella ruler Yasovarmā on the one side and the Kāmbojas coming from Gurjara on the other. The condition of the kingdom of Gauḍa was now very deplorable. At this time Yasovarmā made himself master of the country up to Mithilā and Magadha and the Kāmbojas occupied Gauḍa or northern Bengal. Proofs of the power of the Kāmbojas are still seen in Dinājpur. Kings of Gauḍa belonging to the Kāmboja line ruled Northern Bengal up to the year 888 of the Saka Era or 966 A.D. This fact is proved by an inscription on a pillar of the temple of the god Siva, established by king of the Kāmboja dynasty which has been kept in the garden in front of the palace at Dinājpur.¹⁵ From the copper-plate inscription of the Pāla kings we learn that during this period of revolution, Gopāla II left his kingdom. First he took shelter in Northern Rāḍha. Then he went from one place to another and at last met his death in the valley of the Himālayas. During this turmoil Rājyadhara became king of Koch Bihār. About this time, troubles arose among

15. Vide Banger Jatiya Itihās, Rājanyaknāda, pp. 170—171.

the members of the royal family of Kāmarūpa about succession to the throne. From the copper-plate inscription of Ratnapāla of Kāmarūpa we learn that when Tyāga Siāha, the last king of Bhagadatta's line, died sonless, his subjects, for lack of a suitable heir, installed as king Brahmapāla who belonged to the same stock. Rājyadhara occupied Koch Bihār during the troubles that arose over the selection of the ruler. After him his son Ārya-Sridhara acknowledged the authority of Brahmapāla. He became a favourite of the king of Kāmarūpa by siding with him in the battle with the Kānara or the Karnāṭa army. In the genealogical record, there is mention of the defeat of the Kānarā. This seems to have reference to the army of Karnāṭa led by the Kāmboja king. In the Purāṇas, Kāmboja, Karnāṭa and Lāṭa are spoken of as adjoining countries.¹⁶ Ārya Sridhara's son Dharādharma has been given the name of Lakshmikara Thākura in the 'Maithil Pañji.' Śūlapānī, the son of Dharādharma, is also known as Vāṇsadhara Thākura.¹⁷ He was a devoted worshipper of the god Siva. He rose to eminence as the feudatory chief of Koch Bihār. His son Pinakapānī and Chakrapānī received high honours. It has been said that they had defied the hero of Yadu's race. This means that they hurled defiance at the Yādava king who had invaded Kāmarūpa at the time. The genealogical record of Kāsīdāsa does not make any mention of his name. But we know from contemporary copper-plate inscriptions

Ārya
Sridhara
as
feudatory
of
Brahmapāla

Vāṇsadhara
Thākura

Pinaka and
Chakrapānī

16. Vide Banger Jatiya Itihas, Rājanyakānda, pp. 171.

17. Vide Mithilā-darpana by Rasbihari Lal Das, Vol. I, p. 82

Jātavarma's
conquest

that his name was Jātavarmā. In the 8th Sloka of the Belaba-copper-plate inscription of Bhojavarmā, it is recorded that Jātavarmā had inflicted a defeat on the king of Kāmarupa¹⁵. Chakrapāni went abroad leaving his father's kingdom. It seems probable that when his elder brother ascended the paternal throne, he went out to seek his own fortune. About this time the Pālas were reigning in Gauḍa or North Bengal, the Yādavas in East Bengal, and the chiefs of the Karnāṭa line in Rāḍha or West Bengal. Most probably Chakrapāni came

Sarvakara
Thākura

to Rāḍha and made friends with the Karnāṭas. In the 'Maithil pañji' he has been called Sarvakara Thākura. In this work as well as in contemporary inscriptions his son Devadhara is known as Sṛidhara Thākura.¹⁷

Sṛidhara
Thākura

Kāsi-dāsa calls him 'the Prime Minister separated from Bengal' in his genealogical record. Tañkapāni was the son of Pinākāpāni of Koch Bihār. He was a mighty warrior. The king of Gauḍa had showered honours upon him on account of the military aid rendered by him. He was also given the hand of the daughter of the minister of Gauḍa. From the contemporary history of the Pāla dynasty we learn that Vighrahapāla III, the king of Gauḍa, defeated the Chedi emperor Karnadeva, the father-

Tañkapāni

in-law of Jātavarmā, the ruler of Vanga. The minister of this Pāla king was called Yogadeva. After defeating the Chedi emperor Vighrahapāla married his daughter Yauvana-srī. During the continuance of this ceremony, the daughter of Yogadeva was given in marriage to Tañkapāni.

Kāsi-dāsa says that this marriage took place between the two families of Deva and Dāsa and that as a result of this the two Kāyastha Samājas of the north and the south were united together.

Taṅkapānī's son was Ratnapānī. He was deprived of the kingdom of Koch-Behār by the Mlechchhas. It has been mentioned before that the then Mlechchha king of Kāmarūpa belonging to the line of Bhagadatta was alarmed at the establishment of alliance between these kings of Koch Bihār and the Pāla kings of Gauḍa, and that in order to secure the safety of his frontiers he drove away Ratnapānī and lived for some time in the country. Ratnapānī's son Narasiṅha Dāsa was known as Naradāsa Thākura in the Kāyastha Samāja of Varendra. Jadunandana's "Dhākura" mentions the fact that Naradāsa Thākura lived in the city of Kubaṅcha within his own territories, and that all men still praise his maternal grandfather for his high talents and remarkable abilities, known all over the world.¹⁹ But it is a matter of regret that though we hear of the prowess and fame of Yogadeva, the maternal grandfather of Ratnapānī, we do not find even the name of the maternal grandfather of Naradāsa Thākura in the geneological records. It seems that he was either a famous man like Yogadeva or a feudatory chief of the Nāga line. Kāsi-dāsa says that Naradāsa settled in

Ratnapānī

Nara Dāsa

19. "নরদাস ঠাকুর না", কুব্জকনগর ধাম, আছিলেন বরাল্লা আশ্রয়ে।

মাতামহ পৌরুষ, পুৰিহীতে বীর বশ, অজ্ঞাবধি মহিমা ঘোষয়ে।"

Yadunandan's 'Dhākura' p. 34.

K. G. Majumdar's edition of 1813 Saka era

Nara Dāsa
Thākur

the village of Bāñki. He came to Nāgālaya with Bhṛigu Nandī and Muraharadeva of the Chākī family and there formed a Kāyastha Samāja defying the king Ballālasena. From this it seems to us that Nāgālaya was his maternal grand-father's place. In many places of India, the descendants of feudatory Chiefs are even to this day given the title of Thākura. This we think, explains why Narasiñha-Dāsa was called 'Nara Dāsa Thākur.' It has been said before that he left his paternal kingdom in Koch-Behār and settled in the village of Bāñki in Vārendra. In those days, Mahāsthāna the chief city of Vārendra, was raised to the status of a shrine by Rāmapāla of Gauḍa. Nara-dāsa Thākur lived there for some time. The inscription of the place bears his name²⁰.

Baṭu Dāsa

Nara-Dāsa Thākur belonged to the side of the Pāla kings. His son Baṭudāsa came over to the side of Ballālasena for which act his father discarded him. The king Ballālasena, however, made him the principal feudatory chief of Eastern Bengal. Baṭu Dāsa had two sons, Sṛihari and Sṛidhara. Sṛidhara collected a number of excellent Sanskrit slokas and embodied them in a book called the 'Sūkti-karṇāmṛita'. This book bought him fame and from it we obtain information of his father's acquisition of the post of the Mahāsāmanta or principal feudatory chief.

20. Bagurār Itihās by P. C. Sen. Part II. p. 71 and Banger Jātiya Itihās, Rājanyakānda, p. 224

The Ghosha Dynasty.

Before taking up the subject of the rise of the Ghosha dynasty in Assam, we propose to describe its origin with the help of the materials derivable from the contemporary inscriptions. The copperplate-inscriptions (circa 6th Century A. D.) of Dharmāditya, Gopachandra, and Samāchāradeva discovered in Faridpur, give the names of Chandra Ghosha, Soma Ghosha, Vihita Ghosha and other Mahattaras.¹ Then in the seventh century A.D. when Sasāṅkadeva, the king of Karnasuvarna, extended his rule upto the far off Kaliṅga and southern Kosala, many Kāyasthas of his country migrated to those places and held high posts there under the State. About this time Sūrya Ghosha assumed the title of Mahārāja and established his rule in Central India. A stone-tablet bearing inscriptions of his time is to be found in the Museum at Nāgpur. From this stone-tablet we learn that the king Sūrya Ghosha flourished in Central India before the rise of the Soma dynasty. His son died in consequence of a fall from the terrace of his palace. In order to secure spiritual bliss for the spirit of his son, he built some Hindu temples and Buddhistic Vihāras. He ruled in Central India towards the middle of the seventh century as is proved by the character of inscription on the stone-tablet mentioned above.²

The following account of the Kāyasthas during the later period is taken from a *Kulapanji* of Uttara-Rāḍhiya Kāyasthas :—

Ghosha
Mahattaras

Sūrya
Ghosha

1. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911, p. 501.

2. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1905, p. 609.

“Vibhānu-Upakarna was born in the family of Chitra-gupta. The king Sūryadhvaja of the Ghosha dynasty was his descendant. Through the grace of the Sun-god he had his abode in Sūrya-nagara. His descendants gradually spread over many countries. One of them went to Chandrahāsagiri and became the ruler of it. Chandra (of this line) came to Ayodhyā from Central India. From this Chandra Suryapada came into being. Soma Ghosha was his descendant. He was a member of the family of Sṛi-Karna.”³

From the above accounts we learn that Surya Ghosha was king in Suryanagara. Some members of his line even occupied the throne of Chandrahāsa Giri in far-off Malabar coast. Some of them came to Ayodhyā from Central India. We also know from the *Kulapanji* of Uttara-Rādhiya Kāyasthas that King Āditya Sūra of Rādha had brought to his court five Kāyasthas from Kolāñcha in the month of Phālguna of the year 804 of the Saka Era (882 A. D.). Their names were Anādivara Siṅha, Soma Ghosha, Purusottama Dāsa, Deva Datta and Sudarsana Mitra and their respective *gotras* were Vātsya, Saukāliṇa, Maudgalya, Kāsyapa and Visvāmitra. Of these

3. “चित्तगुप्तान्वये जातो विभानु उपकर्णकः ।
 तस्यात्मजः सूर्यध्वजो धीषवंश-महोपतिः ॥
 सूर्यदेवप्रसादेन सूर्याख्यनगरं वसेत् ।
 तद्वंशजक्रमेणैव नामादेशान्तरं गताः ॥
 चन्द्रहासगिरौ केचित् चन्द्रहासगिरौचरः ।
 मध्यदेशादयोध्यायां चन्द्रात् सूर्यपदोद्भवः ॥
 तद्वंशजः श्रीश्रीमधोषः श्रीकर्मस्य कुलामुगः ॥”

Ghosha and Siṅha lived in Ayodhyā, Dāsa in Mathurā and Datta and Mitra in Māyāpuri.⁴

The English rendering of an extract in the *Kulapanji* is given below :—

'Soma Ghosha who come to Rāḍha was born in the family of Suryapada of Ayodhyā. His son was called Aravinda. He also had two grandsons. The great king Āditya-sūra gave them the village of Jayayāna for their residence. He also gave to Soma Ghosha 2700 villages from Jayayāna to Ekachakrā and made him a feudatory chief. Then Soma Ghosha settled in Yayayāna with his sons and grandsons having received a sanad (from the king) to the effect that he should have to pay a tribute of 15000 gold coins and should have to enjoy the kingdom from generation to generation in obedience to the king. There Soma built his dwelling house and a temple of the god Siva. He also established there a Siva-liṅga called Somesvara Siva and an image of the goddess Sarvamaṅgalā. He made the place his capital having dug a moat around it. He duly protected his subjects. He invested his son with royalty and lived on the bank of

Soma Ghosha

4. "वेदीनराष्ट्रसाधे शक्ति कुलस्थभास्करे ।
 वात्स्यः मौकालीनश्च तथा सौदगल्य एव च ॥
 काश्यपविश्वामित्रौ च पञ्चमोवक्रमेण वै ।
 अनादिवरसि ह्यस्य सोमसोपस्य सुधीरः ॥
 पुरुषोत्तमदासश्च देवदत्तो महासतिः ।
 सुधीरायगण्ड्यश्च निवकुले सुदर्शनः ॥
 अथोन्नानिवासी सिंही धीवश्च तथा पुनः ।
 मयूरानिवासी दासः कोलाश्वद्राटमानतः ।
 मन्नापुरीनिवादिनौ दत्तमित्रौ तथासौ ॥"

the Ganges where he died a few years after. That place is now called Somapāra.”⁵

The village of Jajān in the district of Murshidabad and within the jurisdiction of the Sub-division of Kandi is still conspicuous in North Rāḍha on account of the Sivaliṅga of Somesvara established by Soma Ghosha and the temple of the goddess Sarvamaṅgalā built by him. His moat and the remains of many of his structures are seen near this temple. According to the *Kulapanji* mentioned above, Soma Ghosha became the feudatory chief of 2700 villages from Jajān to Ekachakrā. This village of Ekachakrā or Ekachākā is five miles away from Suri, the Sadar station of the district of Birbhum, and it stands to the south-east of this town. It is

5. ‘तह’शज सोमघोषः श्रीकृष्णस्य कुलानुगः ।
 पुत्रस्ते अरविन्दार्यः पौत्राणां हयमेव च ॥
 आदित्यशूर-शुक्लैः दद्यात्ते वासमुत्तमम् ।
 जययानः याम नामो वासाय न ददौ नृपः ॥
 ततश्चतुर्हि क्षु यामं सप्तदिशस्तानि च ।
 सामन्तराजकूपेण एकचक्रावधिं ददौ ॥
 पञ्चदशसहस्राणां स्वर्णमूर्दां प्रयच्छते ।
 पुत्रपौत्रादिभोगेन समाजया अधीश्वरः ॥
 दानपत्रं सुखं प्राप्तं यथी ते जययानके ।
 तथा वासुदेवादींश्च शिवसीधस्य स्थापनम् ॥
 सोमेश्वरनामधेयं शिवलिङ्गं प्रतिष्ठितम् ।
 स्थापयामास देवो च नाम्ना तां सर्वमङ्गलां ॥
 राज्ञा सोमघोषस्तत्र परिष्ठाकृतदेष्टितः ।
 प्रजादिपालने दाने एतः सर्वसुखकृतम् ॥
 तत्पुत्र अरविन्दार्यो दत्त्वा राज्यं सुविष्टतम् ।
 चक्रावधौ तनुव्यानं सोमपादां क्रियन्सेतु ॥”

to the west of Jajān and is at a distance of twenty-six miles from it. Hence we see that the feudatory state of Soma Ghosha extended over thirteen *crores* (26 miles) from east to west. Its extent from south to north is not definitely known.

It has been narrated before that Soma Ghosha came to the court of Āditya-sūra in the year 882 A. D. A copper-plate grant of Isvara Ghosha of the Ghosha dynasty has of late been found in the recordroom of the Māldoar estate in the district of Dinajpur. This grant has been deciphered and brought to the notice of the public by Sriyut Akshaya-kumara Maitreya C.I.E.⁶ We get the following account of the Ghosha dynasty from this grant :—

‘Dhūrta Ghosha, who derived his being from the lord of Rāḍha and who became a prominent member of the royal family on account of his being powerful like the sun, vanquished his enemies with his sharp-edged sword. From him was born Sri Vāla-Ghosha who manifested himself in the earth like the orb of the sun, being himself skilled in war and having killed his enemies with the blow of his sword which resembled thunder. As he was a king of iron-rule his fame was sung on earth. He destroyed his enemies as the sun destroys darkness ; to his foes he was like thunder to the mountain ; hence his praise was sung on earth. He had a queen of the name of Sadbhāvā, who was but the another form of the goddess Bhavānī, who was devoted to her husband like Sītā and who

Dhūrta
Ghosha

Vāla Ghosha

6. *Sahitya*, 1320 B. S. p. 37.

Isvara
Ghosha

was like Lakshmi of Vishnu. His son was Isvara Ghosha who was victorious like Fire, who possessed an adventurous spirit and who surpassed even Indra in point of personal effulgence. His valour was sufficient to conquer even the most powerful foes and when the wives of his enemies heard of his great valour their faces grew dark on account of the flow of tears.'⁷

This grant shows that the Ghosha dynasty in which Isvara Ghosha was born had at one time ruled Rāḍha. These kings were powerful enough to extend their rule beyond the limits of the country of Rāḍha. It has been narrated before that Soma Ghosha became a feudatory chief in Rāḍha in the year 882 A. D. His descendants rose into power during the turmoil created by the invasion of Gauḍa by the armies of Kārṇāṭa and Kāmboja and came to be known as lords of Rāḍha. Dhūrta Ghosha probably

7. “बभूव राधाधिपत्यं तन्मा तिस्रोऽवधौ रूपवशकेतुः ।

श्रीधूतघोषो निशितालिधारी निर्व्यापिनाग्निजगत्त्वलेशः ॥१

आसीत्ततोपि समरव्यवसायसार-विष्णुर्जितासि कुलिशस्तवेरिवरैः ।

श्रीबालघोष इति घोषकुलाज्जातो मार्त्तण्डमण्डलमिव प्रथितः पृथिव्या ॥२

तस्याभवद्वलघोष इति प्रचलदण्डः सुतो जगति गौतमहाप्रतापः ।

येनेह शोधतिमिरे कदिवाकरेण वज्रायितं प्रबलवेरि कुलाचलेषु ॥३

भवानीषा परामूर्त्या सोतेव च पतिव्रता ।

सङ्गावा नाम तस्याभूदभाय्या पद्मेव शङ्किनं ॥४

तस्या ईश्वरघोष एव तनयः सहायधामाजय-

त्येको दुर्हरसाहसः किमपरे व्याख्या नितेन्द्रियति ।

यस्य प्रोज्झित-शौर्यनिष्ठा तरिपोः प्रौढप्रतापश्च ते-

रास्यस्याप्यजलप्रयालमलिनं शयस्त्रियो विवर्धति ॥५

was a scion of this dynasty. When Koch-Bihar was under the feudatory chiefs of the Dāsa dynasty and North Bengal under the Kāamboja rulers who had forcibly taken this part of the country from the Pala Kings, Dhūrta Ghosha made himself master of Dhekkari corresponding to the eastern part of Koch-Bihar, modern Goalpara and part of Kāmarupa. Srijut Akshaya Kumar Maîtreya, noticing the word 'Dhekkari' in the afore-said grant has identified the place with Dhekura described in the Dharma-maṅgala of Rāḍha. But when we read it in connection with the names of other places occurring in this grant, it does not seem at all probable that the place called Dhekkari here was in Rāḍha. It is more likely that Dhūrta Ghosha after his conquest of the western portion of Assam or Kāmarupa inhabited by the Mlechchhas called it 'Dhekkari' after the name of his own native place.⁸

Dhūrta
Ghosha's
Conquest

8. It is here necessary to say a few words about Dhekur in Rāḍha. From the various Dharmamaṅgalas we learn that it was latterly known as Trishastigarh. Karnasena the Chief of the "Bāra Bhuiyas" ruled here after the death of Dharmapāla. At that time a man called Soma Gopa was the revenue collector of the king. Mahamudā, the minister of the king of Gauda was a great oppressor. On account of his failure to realise the revenue Soma was put into prison by the minister. His fortune however smiled upon him and he was released by the king who granted him high honours. Soma became a trusted servant of the king. At this time the revenue payable by Karnasena fell into arrears and so Soma was sent to Trishastigarh by the king, with directions to realise the revenue every month and to send it to the royal treasury. Soma Gopa came there and began to reside inside the Garh. Karnasena treated him with great respect. Ichhāi the son of Soma was a votary of the goddess Bhavāni from his very childhood. Being initiated into the mysteries of religion by an Avadhūta

The position
of Dhekuri.

In the *Dākārṇava Tantra*, Kāmarupa and Dhekkari have been mentioned together. The people of Upper Assam call the inhabitants of Kāmarūpa and Goālpārā as well as the language spoken by them by the name of *Dhekuri* or *Dhekeri*. The following extract of the great philologist Sir G. A. Grierson may be read in this connection,—

“The Assamese spoken in the district of Kamrup and Goalpara which are the most western on the northside of the

Sannyrāsi, he attained success in Sakti-Sādhana. The powerful low-caste people of the place soon became attached to him. He received the following boons from the Great Mother Mahā-sakti when the goddess appeared before him—

1st. That he would be allowed to take revenge on his father's oppressors who had made him a captive in Gauda.

2nd. That the Goddess would thenceforth reside in the Garh in the form of Syāmā so that Ichhāi might be always blessed with her sight.

3rd. That Trisbastigarh would grow famous again under the name of ‘Dhekur’.

Soon after this Ichhāi Ghosha took possession of the Garh and became king in Dhekur. Karnasena fled to the king of Gauda with his family and brought every thing to his notice. The king sent him against Ichhāi at the head of an army. A sanguinary battle was fought on the bank of the river Ajaya. The four sons of Karnasena fell in the battle. The queen then committed suicide by swallowing poison. Karnasena too was about to renounce the world. The king of Gauda then consoled him and gave him the hand of Bañjāvati, his wife's sister. He also made over to him Mayanā-garh in the shape of dowery. Through the favour of Bāmāi Pandit she was blessed with a son Lāusena by name. In his early life Lāusena was regarded as a great hero. His maternal uncle, the minister of Gauda, was all along inimically disposed towards him. In order to secure the death of his nephew he sent him to fight against Ichhāi Ghosh of Dhekur. In the war that followed Ichhāi was killed and Lāusena became the king of Dhekur.

Brahmaputra Valley, is not exactly the same as the standard language of Upper and Central Assam, being influenced by the Rajbanshi Bengali spoken immediately to west, in West Goalpara and the Bengal district of Rangpur. This form of Assamese is sometimes called *Dhekeri*, which is however considered more or less as a term of opprobrium having been first used when the portion of

From the above account some historians have supposed that *Isvara Ghosha* of the copper-plate-grant was identical with *Ichhāi Ghosh* of the *Dharmamañgala* and that the Ghosha dynasty to which he belonged was of the milk-man caste. But *Srijut Akshaya Kumar Maitreya* who first deciphered the grant of *Isvara Ghosha* admits in view of a certain expression* in it that he (*Isvara Ghosha*) was a *Kāyastha* by caste.† It is clearly written in the *Dharmamañgala* that though the place was called *Trishastigarh* during the time of *Karnasena*, *Ichhāi Ghosh* revived its old name '*Dhekur*.' In this connexion, I refer the reader to the following passage from the *Dharmamañgala* of *Ghanarāma*—

‘অপর আৰ্ঘনা শুন, দ্বিষষ্টিৰ গড় পুনঃ, নাম হ'ব অজয় ঢেকুৰ ।’

From this it is clear that it was called '*Dhekur*' before the time of *Karnasena*. When this place was occupied by *Karnasena* or one of his ancestors it came to be called *Senabhūma* or *Senapāhārī* (modern *Syāmārtapargarh*). In the village of *Jashpur* twelve miles to the north of modern *Senapāhārī* there is a temple of the god *Siva* called '*Dhekuresvara Siva*.' By the side of the temple there is a tank called *Dhekura*.‡ Here two ancient ramparts and the faint trace of a moat are shewn as the ruins of the king's palace. From these evidences it appears that *Dhekur* consisted of the modern *Senabhūma pargana* on both banks of the *Ajaya* as well as the part of the district five or six miles to the north of it. The *Sena* dynasty mentioned above ruled here after the *Ghosha* dynasty. Latterly for some time, it came under the rule of *Ichhāi Ghosh*. Next it be

* ‘सुकरयन्त्रास्त्रयमाननापूर्वकः ।’

† Vide *Sahitya*, 1320 B. S. p. 175.

‡ Vide *Birbhūm Vivarana*, part I. p. 233.

Dhekeri or
Dhekuri

Assam now known as the Kamrup and Goalpara district was conquered by the Ahoms. The Ahom Rāja gave the name of Sarkar Dhekeri or Dhekuri to this tracts. According to Rai Gunabhiram Barua's Buranji, this name was given to this portion of Assam by the Ahoms to denote that it had been conquered and consequently the people hated the name."⁹

The above extract was written on the testimony of the Buranji by Gunabhirām Barua. It has been said above that Kāmarupa and Dhekkari have been mentioned together in the Dākārṇava Tantra. The copper-plate grant of Isvara Ghosha proves conclusively that this place was called Dhekkari long

came ruled by the line of Lāusena. After this the Sinha dynasty ruled this land. We learn from the Rāmacharita that during the time of Rāmapāla (1052—1082 A. D.) this place was under the rule of Pratāpa Sinha. § Hence we cannot admit that Ichhāi Ghosh belonged to the line of ancient royal family of Rādha. We draw the attention of the reader to the following lines addressed by Mahāmad to the king of Gauḍa.

“একবার মনে কর চেকুর অববী ।

কর তার কাহণ পকাশ ছিল কড়ি । ইচ্ছাযোষ এখন না দেয় একবুড়ি ।

তার বাপ সোমযোষ আছিল দুর্জল । তোনার বাপের পাল চাকর কেবল ।

একসের চালু খেয়ে চরাইত গরু । তার বেটা এখন হরেছে করতল ।.....

নবলক টাকার ভূমি যায় বিক্রি করে । না আসে হাজির নিতে বসে থাকে ঘরে ।”

Manik Ganguli's Dharmamangala, p. 154.

It is clearly proved by the above testimony that Soma Ghosh the father of Ichhāi Ghosh was nothing more than a common servant of the king of Gauḍa. He never sat on a throne. Therefore his family cannot be called a family of kings.

9. Vide Linguistic Survey India, Vol. V. Pt. I, p. 4.

“প্রমাণ ইতি প্রমাণসিদ্ধঃ প্রতিদম্বকসৌখিন্দ্রবীজিবীহাকবরবন্ধু
শিখ'ব্রাহ্মণ-প্রমাণ-উদ্ধারনী উদ্ধারিতঃ ।” (রামচরিত)

before the invasion of the Ahoms. From the characters of this grant it has been proved that it was issued in the tenth century of the Christian Era.¹⁰

It has been shewn before that the Ghosha Dynasty flourished in North Rāḍha in the 9th century. Dhurta Ghosha of this dynasty went to Kāmarupa from Dhekuri in Rāḍha towards the middle of the 10th century and came to be known as 'Nripa-vañisa-ketu.' Hence the Dhekuri division of Assam is more than a thousand years old. During the Mughal rule as well as the early days of the East India Company the whole of Assam was divided into four Sarkārs viz., 1 Sarkar Bāṅgalbhum, 2 Sarkar Dhekuri, 3 Sarkar Kāmrup and 4 Sarkar Darang. Sarkar Bāṅgalbhum corresponded to the district of Rangpur and the Eastern portion of Dinajpur. Sarkar Dhekuri was adjoining to it and corresponded to the modern district of Goālpārā and part of Kāmarupa. With the establishment of the rule of the Kāyastha dynasty of Rāḍha in Dhekuri the Bengalis became very influential there. They had also greatly influenced the vernacular of the country. Sir Grierson is very clear on this point. He says :—

"The pronunciation of the vowels appears to approach more nearly to that of Bengali than does standard Assamese."

Afterwards the Ahoms from Upper Assam conquered Kāmarupa. They noticed the

Sarkar
Dhekuri

Dhekuri
dialect

Kāyastha
rule
in Kāmarup

Dhavalā
Ghosha as
Dhala Rāya

difference existing between their own language and that of their subjects and looked upon the latter with contempt. This fact seems to explain why the word 'Dhekuri' was at one time, held to be contemptible to the inhabitants of Eastern Assam. The influence of the 'Dhekuri' dialect is felt not only in Goālpārā, but also in Kāmarupa as well. From this it seems to us that the rule of the Kāyastha dynasty mentioned before spread up to Kāmarupa. The subsequent history of the country also proves this. The copper-plate grant, spoken of before, says that Bala Ghosha the son of Dhūrta Ghosha was a great military genius and was the boast of his caste-people. His son Dhavala Ghosha was a powerful ruler of the kingdom of Dhek-karī. This heroic prince has been called Dhavala Rāya or Dhal Rāy in the Dharmamaṅgala of Rāḍha. He was also known as Karpūra Dhavala. It is written in Māṇik Ganguli's Dharmamaṅgala that at the time of the *Pushyābhisheka* of the king of Gauḍa, the feudatory chiefs of Karnāṭa, Koch, Kaliṅga, Kāṅgura, Tuṅga, Baṅga, Magadha, Drāviḍa, Bhoṭa, and Vārendra, were present. Among these princes Dhala Rāy of Kāṅgura has been described as a mighty prince. But latterly he was puffed up with pride and stopped paying tribute to his suzerain. The king of Gauḍa sent Lāusena to subdue him. This hero fought a terrible battle with Dhala Rāy at Kāmtāgaḍa.¹¹

11. 'কাঙুরে কর্পূরধল কালী সখা বাহ। না দেয় রাজ্যের কর করে অহকার।'

In the Dharmamaṅgala Kāmtā-gaḍa has been likened to the city of Lāṅkā as it had a deep moat around it and was also surrounded by a great river.¹² Here Lāusena halted at a place on the bank of this great river called Deu-dighi. Hari, the father-in-law of Dhala Rāya started on an elephant and Bhagavān Datta his commander-in-chief on horseback to meet him.¹³ Both sides fought furiously. Dhala Rāya was defeated and captured by Kālu, the general of Lāusena. All the Dharmamaṅgalas say that Sāfulā or Sāmulā, the mother of the king of Gaṇḍa, had a wonderful dagger that was invincible and that it was with the help of this weapon that Lāusena was able to inflict a defeat on his adversary. Dhala Rāya had his capital at a place called Kāmtā-gaḍa or fort of Kāmtā. He paid to his suzerain tribute for twenty one years and made peace with him. He and his daughter Kaliṅgā were devoted worshippers of the goddess Kālīkā. In pursuance of the order of the goddess,

Lāusena
conquered
Dhal Rāy

Kāmtapur,
the capital
of
Dhal Rāy

নৃপতি কহেন বাণু প্রবল হইল রিপু মন বিল মনস্তাপ দূর ।

কাঙারু কপূরধল না দেয় ভূমের কর তার ভূষি কর দণ চুর ।”

12. “নাগর্গা সরালে রাখে সমুখে নিরড়ে । উপনীত লাউসেন কামতার গড়ে ।

চৌদিকে গভীর খানা গণ্ডকীর বারি । সবুজের মাঝে যেন শোভে লক্ষ্মীপারী ।

কালিঙ্গা বরণ জল কালদর্প খেলে । পর্বত প্রমাণ চড়ে পড়িছে প্রকুলে ।”

(মাণিক গান্ধারীর ধর্মমাঙ্গল, p. 125)

13. “হরি বাহাদুর রাজার বশুর রবিসুত সম রাগে ।

লগ্নে ধর্মশর নাগের উপর আরোহণে বীর আগে ।

লেনার প্রধান দত্ত তগবান্ পিদিয়া পাগড়া জোড়া ।

চলিল চটপট বাঁধিয়া বকট দড়বড় দাবিয়া খোড়া ।”

Kaliṅgā placed the marriage-garland round the neck of Lāṣena. This marriage was celebrated according to vedic rites and the mantras prescribed in the Vedāṅgas were used by the parties to it. It took place in the capital of Dhala Rāya. The ruins of this city are to be found at a place now called Gosānimārī standing on the river Siṅgimārī at a distance of fourteen miles from the capital of modern Koch Bihār. It was protected by a deep moat and was also surrounded by a large river. The following description of it is taken from the Dharma-maṅgala—

“On all sides of it was the deep water of the river Gaṇḍakī and it looked like the city of Laṅkā surrounded by the sea. The water was black and black snakes played on it. Waves resembling mountains fell on both banks of it.”¹⁴

Rains of
Kāmtapur

The extensive ruins of Kāmtapur still bear testimony to the truth of the above description given in the Dharmamaṅgala. Babu Harendranārāyan Chaudhuri, the late State Judge of Koch Bihār thus writes of the place in his book called ‘The Cooch Behar State’—

“The remains of the city of Kāmtapur are gigantic works of human art and bespeak great power and wealth in the Prince or Princes who conceived such an idea of a capital. The city was of a triangular shape, long from east to west, with a perimeter of about 20 miles. The two sides of this triangle met in the west, and were defended by a high rampart

part, protected by an inner ditch and an outer moat, and covering a length of about 15 miles, while the old Dharla formed the base about 5 miles long and protected in the east from foreign invasion. There were two redoubts, one towards the north-east and the other towards the north-west. The rampart was pierced by four gates of huge proportions, in the north, south and west. The northern gate was called the Hoko-duar. The sides of the rampart here at the gate-way were faced with bricks in mortar, which are still in good condition. The gate in the south was called the Sil-duar or stone-gate, and it cut the rampart in an S curve... It is said that the rampart at this gate-way was lined with stones, and that the gate had a door-way of stone. Several large slabs of granite are still lying in it and a few are yet standing. From this gate issued a high embanked road, which leading through Rangpur went as far as Ghoraghat, which at the time marked the southern boundry of old Kamrup."¹⁶

Buins of
Kāmtā

Now Kāmtāpur is nothing but a heap of ruins. More than a century ago Dr. Buchanan Hamilton visited this place. But many of the things he saw here do not exist now.¹⁷

In the 'Kāñgur Pālā' of the Dharmamañgalas there is a description of the place to show its impregnability and inaccessibility. Nothing is definitely known about the age and the builder of this old fort. If the Dharmamañgalas

16. The Gooch Behar State and its Land revenue settlement, pp 81-82.

17. Vide Buchanan's Eastern India, edited by Martin, Vol. III, pp. 426-38, for a detailed account of the ruins,

and the copper-plate grant of Isvara Ghosha be studied together, the surmise becomes definite that the fort belonged to the Ghosha dynasty. It might have been founded by the king Dhūrta Ghosha or his son Bāla Ghosha for the protection of the capital city. At first they ruled their territory like independent kings. The feeble Mlechchha dynasty, the usurping Kāmboja dynasty of North Bengal and the Pāla Dynasty of Gauda were so much occupied in protecting their own possessions that they had little time to interfere with them. It seems probable that Dhavala Ghosha of Kāmtā was compelled to acknowledge the suzerainty of Mahipāla of Gauda when the latter had advanced up to the frontier of North Bengal in the course of his reconquest of his father's lost territories. But the Dharmamañgalas do not give the name of the king of Gauda at whose behest Lāusena had marched for the conquest of the kingdom of Kāmarupa. In some of the Dharmamañgalas he has been called the son of Dharmapāla. But this Dharmapāla of the Dharmamañgala has been described as the king of Daṇḍabhukti (roughly corresponding to modern Murshedabad Dt. in the Tirumalai rock inscription of Rājendra Chola). He was defeated and killed by that Chola-conqueror. The next person whom we see as the king of Gauda is Mahipāla I. A few years ago the name of Lāusena used to be associated with that of Mahipāla in the list of the sovereigns of the Kali Yuga given in our Bengali Almanac. Under these circumstances we are led to believe that Mahipāla was materially helped by Lāusena in the reconquest

Dhavala
Ghosha
or
Dhal Ráy

Mahipāla
and,
Lāusena

of his paternal dominions as well as the further extension of his own territories. It seems probable that but for the help of Lāusena Mahipāla could never have reconquered his lost territories of Gauḍa and become a paramount sovereign. Some of the Doma soldiers who went to Kāmarupa with Lāusena settled there. Their descendants still sing of the achievements of Kālu Doma, the general of Lāusena.

In those days whenever there was a social gathering of the Kāyasthas in the house of a richman, learned Brāhmanas were present there and the formula used for salutation was 'at the feet of the Kāyasthas and the Brāhmanas' (कायस्थविप्रचरणे). This seems to explain why the expression 'सकरणनाम्नापमाननापूर्वक' occurs in the copper-plate grant of the Mahāmāṇḍalika Isvara Ghosha. The following list of the members of the royal family and of the officers of the state is given in the grant alluded to above.—

Mahā-
māṇḍalik
Isvar Ghosha
and
his officers

Ashesharāja, Rājyanaka, Rājñi, Rānaka, Rājaputra, Kumārāmātya, Mahāsandhivigrahika, Mahāpratihāra, Mahākaranādhyaksha, Mahāmudrādhikṛita, Mahākshapaṭalika, Mahāsarvādhikṛita, Mahāsenāpati, Mahāpādamūlika, Mahābhogapati, Mahā-tantrādhikṛita, Mahāvvyūhapati, Mahādandanāyaka, Mahākāyastha, Mahāvala-kāstika, Mahāvalādhikaranika, Mahāsāmanta, Mahāthakkura, Angikaranika, Dandapālaka, Kottapati, Ghaṭṭapati, Bhuktipati, Vishayapati, Aindhatāsanika, Antaḥpratihara, Dandapāla, Khandapāla, Duhsādhyasāadhanika, Chauroddharanika, Uparika, Tadāniyuktaka, Abhyantarika, Vāsā-

gārika, Khādyagrāha, Siro-rakshika, Vriddha-dhānaka, Ekaseraka, Kholadūta, Gamāgamika, Lekhadhānaka, Pāniyāgārika, Sāntaki-Karmakara, Golmika, Saulkika, Hastyasvoshtṛa-nauvalavyāpritaka and Gomahishajāvika-vaḍavādhyaksha.

After Dhavala Ghosha his son Isvara Ghosha became a king. We learn from his copper-plate grant that he was a Mahāmāṇḍalika. The king over twelve tributary chiefs or twelve bhaumikas was called the Maṇḍala or the Māṇḍalika.¹⁸ The lord who was superior to the māṇḍalika was called the Mahāmāṇḍalika. His possessions were a hundred times of those of an ordinary king.¹⁹ Hence Isvara Ghosha can not be called a petty chief. From his copper-plate grant we learn that a number of kings had to obey his orders. Under him there were Vishayapati, Bhuktapati, Senāpati and Kōṭṭapati. This shows that Isvara Ghosha had all the officers befitting a mighty monarch. The Lord paramount had the title of 'Rājādhirāja parama-bhaṭṭāraka.' The Mahāmāṇḍalika was the next in order of superiority. In the thirty-fifth year of his reign, on the day of the Mārga-saṅkrānti, he bathed in the river Jaṭodā and taking sesamam seeds, Kusagrass and sacred thread made over, by the aforesaid grant, the village of Digdhāsodikā in Gaṇṭiṭipyaka Vishaya in Pippalamāṇḍala to the Yajurvedi scholar Bhaṭṭa Nibboka Sarmma, the son of the Bhaṭṭa

18. "स्यान्मण्डले द्वादशराजके च" इति विज्ञप्रकाशः ।

19. "सत्तुर्व्योजनपर्यन्तमधिकारः सपत्य च ।

यो राजा तच्छतगुणः स एव मण्डलेश्वरः ॥"

(नन्ददेवपुराण जीवजन्मवृत्त ८६ चः)

Vasúdeva with the object of "increasing the virtue and fame of himself as well as of his parents". The Rāja of Maldoar in Dinajpur District calls himself the descendant of this Nibboka Sarmā.

The Kālikāpurāṇa contains an account of the special sanctity of the river Jatodā. According to this book, the source of this river is stated to be in the Himālayas to the west of the river Suvarṇa-mānasa. Bathing in it one obtains the same spiritual efficacy as in the holy Ganges. If a man bathes in this river on the eighth day of the waxing moon in the month of Chaitra he attains a place in Sivaloka. On the western bank of it and at a short distance from it there is a famous Pīṭha known as Jalpisa.²⁰

20. "कामरूपन्तु सकलं पीठं देवमवलया ।

प्रत्येकं दर्शयामास कृततस्त्रिपुरान्तकः ॥

प्रथमं कर्तोयास्यां सत्यगङ्गां सदाशिवाम् ।

पुण्यतीथमर्थी शृङ्गां दक्षिणाब्धेः कगामिनीम् ॥

ततस्तु कामरूपस्य वायव्यां त्रिपुरान्तकः ।

आत्मनो लिङ्गमतुलं जय्यीशाख्यं व्यदर्शयत् ॥

सुवर्णमानसस्तत्र नदमुख्यो मनोहरः ।

नन्दिनोऽनुग्रहयाशु मानसाख्यं सरन्तु तत् ॥

आगतञ्चाक्रथा शम्भोः पूर्वमेव तपस्यतः ।

जटोद्भवा तत्र नदी हिमवत्प्रमथा शुभा ॥

यस्यात् स्यात्वा नरः पुण्यमाप्नोति जाड्वीसमम् ।

गौरीविवाहसमये सर्वैसां दृगणैः कुलः ॥

जलाभिषेकसमये जटाजटोपुत्रः पुराः ।

तेनैव रमभवदयस्याख्यटोदाख्या नदी ततः ॥

चेन्नै सासि सिताष्ट्यां यस्यां स्यात्वा नरी ब्रजेत् ।

पूर्वायाया नरश्चे ह जिवस्य सदनं प्रति ॥" (कालिकापुराण)

In the map of Major Rennel that was prepared more than a century ago the position of a river called "Jerdecker" was shown to the east of Jalpesa. This seems to be a corrupt form of the ancient compound name of 'Jaṭodā-dhekkari.' This river Jaṭodā now flows by the side of Gosānimāri, the site of the ancient Kāmtāgarh, under the name of Jaridharla. In modern Koch Bihār this river is in some places known as Dharlā and as Jaladhākā in others.

Capital
of
Iavara
Ghosha

Isvara Ghosha had issued the grant in question from the capital city of Dhekkari having bathed in the river Jaṭodā. From this it seems to us that though positions of the modern districts of Koch Bihār, Goālpāra and Kāmrupa were included in the ancient kingdom of Dhekkari, yet the capital of the kingdom was situated at modern Gosānimāri on the bank of the river Jaridharla in the modern Koch Bihār State. The confluence of Jaridharlā or Buradharlā at a distance of four miles from the temple of the goddess Kāmatesvari or as it is now called Gosānimāri is an old place of pilgrimage. Even now many people come to bathe in the river on the day of *Mārga sankrānti* and the eighth day of the waxing moon in the month of Chaitra. Perhaps the site of the capital of the Mahā-māṇḍalika of the Ghosha dynasty is now covered by the vast heap of ruins at a place called Rājpat at a distance of about one mile in the north-western direction from the temple of Kāmatesvari and four miles to the west of the river of Jaridharla. By the side of this Rājpat there is a tank called Kailāsa-dighi on the eastern bank of which lie the

remains of the ancient temple of the goddess Kālikā.

Dharmapāla, the king of the Mlechchas, grew very powerful during the reign of Isvara Ghosha and took possession of the country as far as Rangpur. An account of this conquest has been given before. It seems that in his old age Isvara Ghosha's kingdom was wrested from him by Dharmapāla. In his copper-plate grant the capital of Dharmapāla has been called Kāmarupa-pura. Perhaps the lord of Kāmarupa had altered the name of Dhekkari given by the kings of the Ghosha dynasty and called it Kāmarupapur. This seems to explain why no trace of the name of "Dhekkari" is to be met with in these parts. In the Dharmamangalas of Rāḍha 'Kāmarupapura' has been called 'Kāṅgura.' About 1062 A.D, the territories of the Ghosha dynasty of this place came for some time under the rule of Dharmapāla of Kāmarupa. But on his death about 1075 A.D. his weak son Havachandra came to the throne and lost the whole of his land from Kāmtā to Kāmarupa. This tract was conquered by Rāmapāla of Gauḍa.

Over thirard
of
Ghosha
dynasty

Kāmarupapu
Kāngur

The Deva Dynasty.

Rise of the
Deva dynasty

We learn from the Rāmācharita that during the reign of Rāmapāla, a Feudatory Chief named Māyana conquered the king of Kāmarūpa in order to save the subjects from anarchy.²¹ It seems probable that after the conquest of Kāmarūpa, a man named Tishyadeva or Tigmadeva ruled Prāggyotisha as a tributary prince under the king of Gauḍa. But nothing is definitely known about him. We learn from the Kamauli copper-plate grant of Vaidyadeva that the king of Gauḍa, hearing of the rebellion in the east of the king Tigmyadeva upon whom he had lavished honours, conferred the sovereignty of the kingdom on Vaidyadeva, who was endowed with all qualities and was of great fame.²² It was Rāmapāla's son Kumārapāla who had sent Vaidyadeva for the suppression of the rebellion. In obedience to his master's orders, Vaidyadeva marched against

21. “तस्य जितकामरूपादिविषयविनिहसः मानसम्पादः ।

महिमानसायनशृपो यतमानस्य प्रत्राभिरन्तार्थम् ॥”

(रामचरित १।४७)

22. “एतादृशो हरिहरिद्वि सत्कृतस्य

श्रीतिष्ठादेवशृपतेर्विक्रान्तिं निश्चयः ।

गौडेश्वरेण भुवि तस्य नरेश्वरत्वे

श्रीवैद्यदेव-सर्वकौर्त्तिरयं नियुक्तः ॥

कवमिव शिरसादावाशां प्रभोरुक्तेजसः

कतिपयदिनैर्देला जिह्वः प्रयाणमसौ द्रुतं ।

तनवनिपतिं जिला युद्धे बभूव महोपति-

त्रिजमुजपरिषन्देः साक्षाद्विवस्यति-विक्रमः ॥”

Vide Gauḍalekhamāṇā, p. 121.

the rebellious chief, defeated him in battle and became king in his stead. From this copper-plate grant we also learn that Vaidyadeva's grand-father Yogadeva who was highly learned and of great valour became minister, a position subsequently enjoyed by his descendants for several generations.²³ We are led to believe that the members of the Deva family had been working as ministers of the Pāla dynasty from the time of Mahipāla. From Kāsi-dāsa we learn that 'the Deva family came to Vañga from Añga.' Mudgagiri or Munghyr in Añga was the capital of the Pāla kings from Devapāla to Nārāyanapāla. The account of Kāsi-dāsa shows that the Deva family lived in Añga under the patronage of Pāla kings. Kāsi-dāsa says 'that the seven gotras of the Deva family are to be found in Gauḍa. All of these gotras except the Ālamyān gotra that went over to the Varendra-samāja belonged to the Rāḍhiya-samāja. The family of Ālamyāna was held in respect in the court of the king of Gauḍa and was like the right-hand of the king. The members of this family were noted for their wisdom and good qualities. They were charitably disposed and appreciated good qualities in others. Sikhidhvaja was the foremost among them and received high honours every where. His heir was Kesava. His descendants held the *kula-chhatra* in Anga and Vanga and became glorious. Among them, one called Eka-

The account
of
Deva family
by Kāsi-dās

23. "यस्य वंशक्रमेणामृतं सचिवः शास्त्रविचरः ।

योगदेव इति खगलः स्मरद्दोहं खलिक्रमः ॥"

(Kamauli plate of Vaidyadeva, Sloka, 3)

From
Yogadeva
to
Günākara

deva migrated from Aṅga to Vaṅga. Yogadeva was a scion of his family. He was like Vrihaspati in learning and intelligence and was a favourite of the king. As Prime-minister, he was admired everywhere. He had four sons namely Bodhi, Jñāna, Madhu and Sṛīdhara. All of them were learned and skilled in the use of weapons. Bodhideva was the eldest son. He rose to the office of the Mahāpātra and thus glorified the name of his father. Jñāna was known everywhere for his great wisdom. Madhukaradeva lost his family honour. Sṛīdhara was a bit low in character, but his place was high in point of family honour. Bodhideva had three sons called Budhadeva, Vaidhadeva and Kuladeva. The eldest brother Vaidhadeva had received honours at the hands of the king and he commanded respect in Kāngur. But on account of his being away from the seat of the family, he lost his status in society. One branch of the family of Budhadeva lived where they were and the other branch went to the north. Kuladeva was the youngest of all. But his family honour being greater than that of his eldest brother, he was respected in the *Kula-sabhā*. His son Dhruvadeva was known as the *Kulapati* or the head of the family. He acquired great fame. He was not a follower of Ballālasena. Bhṛigu Nandi was pleased to hear of his fame, brought him to his place and showed great respect. His son Günākara who was accomplished in all arts was honoured with the '*Kulārāja-chhatra* at Bānakōṭa.' ²⁴

24. Bāṅger Jātiya Itihāsa, Rājanyakāṇḍa, pp. 224-225.

It has been said before that according to the copper-plate grant of Vaidyadeva, Yogadeva was the minister of the Pāla dynasty. Hence we see that the account given by Kāsi-dāsa is the same that we find in the above mentioned copper-plate grant on this point. This grant contains the following account of Yoga-deva's son Bodhidēva :—

“In ancient days the king Rāmapāla had a minister of the name of Bodhideva who possessed true and perfect knowledge, who was known far and wide and whose conduct was pure. On account of his wonderful qualities he had beaten down his rivals. In those days there was none accomplished like him. The name of his wife was Pratāpadevi. She was known as the abode of piety, fortune and fame. Her personal grace was said to have no limit and she was the pride and delight of her husband. Bodhideva begot in her a son of the name of Vaidyadeva who was highly famous and possessed great personal charms. In the overflowing sea of his fame even mount Kailāsa itself looked as small as the germ of a lotus plant. Hearing the shouts of joy made at the time of his birth by the soothsayers and the beggars, the soldiers of the enemy lost appetite, sleep and patience and fell into a swoon. But the tears of joy issuing out of the eyes of his friends and well-wishers, extinguished the fire of the valour of the enemy's army. He was an agreeable minister to the famous Rāmapāla's son Kumārapāla who was waited on by the prosperity of the Empire. The deer living inside the orb of the moon will take to its heels for fear of being

Bodhideva,
minister of
Rāmapāla

Vaidyadeva,
King of
Kāmarūpa

swallowed by the lion made of gold taken from the diadems of the hostile kings and decorating the top of his tall palace. Pleasing to the board of ministers as the sun to the lotus, and like the vast ocean of fame, this Vaidyadeva was like Karṇa, the king of Champā, in respect of natural charity, and to the lily of the minds of his friends he was like the cold-beamed moon. At the time of the conquest of South Vāṅga, the cries of victory raised by the navy terrified the elephants guarding the quarters and it was for want of the place to remove to, that they could not stir from their station. If the particles of water thrown up by the strokes of the oars could remain in the air, then the orb of the moon might have been washed thereby and freed from its spot. The prime-minister Vaidyadeva, who possessed keen intelligence and was the foremost of the meritorious, was dearer than life to the king Kumārapāla of Gauḍa who was like the sun in the valour of his arms, whose fame filled up the three worlds and who was wise like Vrihaspati, as he constantly thought of the kingdom in its seven parts.”²⁵

It is highly probable that the name Vaidyadeva has been written as Vaidhadeva in the book of Kāsi-dāsa through the mistake of the scribe. Like his father and his grand-father

25. “यस्य शुद्धसचिवः पूरामवहोचिदेव इति तत्त्वबोधमूः ।

विश्वमेव विदितोऽङ्गु तै गुं ये रुज्ज्मितात्मसदृशः चित्तावयं ॥ ५

अस्य प्रतापदेवी पद्मी चर्मर्द्धिं कौलिं-विश्रान्तिः

आसीदस्त्रीम-कान्तिः सन्तोषस्याकृतिः पतुः ॥ ६

अमृदमुत्थालमयीऽस्य विश्रुतः श्रीवैद्यदेवः परया श्रिया युतः ।

यदुच्छलतुक्कौलिं सरोवरोदरे पद्माङ्गु रामः शिव-भूषरोभवत् ॥ ७

he became the chief minister of the king of Gauḍa. He defeated Tigmyadeva and ascended the throne of Kāmarūpa. We learn from contemporary inscriptions and the Vikramāṅkacharita that a little before the invasion of Vaidya deva, Jātavarman, the son-in-law of Emperor Karṇadeva, the lord of Chedi, had invaded Kāmarūpa under orders of his father-in-law and that after him the Chālukya king Vikramāditya II conquered the kingdom. These successive invasions had no doubt rendered the country weak and impoverished. The kingdom had hardly

देवञ्चोषु च तर्ककेषु च जनुर्हिष्टस्य दिष्टिश्रुते-
 रन्नखप्रवृत्तीर्भटिलिरिभटैरन्वच्य स'सुच्छ्रितं ।
 किञ्चे तन्निज-वन्धु वृन्द-नयन-प्रोज्झत-हर्षाव्यभिः
 पारक्य-प्रसर-प्रतापदहनस्यासृद्धिनिर्वापणं ॥ ८
 सोय' राम-नरेन्द्रजस्य सचिवः सामान्य-लक्ष्मीनुषः
 प्रख्यातस्य कुमारपालद्वपतेश्चित्तानुरूपोऽभवत् ।
 यस्याराति-किरीट-हाटककतप्रासाद-कण्ठीरव-
 शास-वासवशादपेक्षति विधोर्विन्वाङ्मरुपौ सगः ॥ ९
 सचिवसमाज-सरोज तिग्मभानुः प्रसन्नयशोऽम्बु चिरेव वैद्यदेवः ।
 महज-वदान्यतयैव चन्द्रकेशः सुजन-मनःकुसुदेषु शीतरश्मिः ॥ १०
 यस्यानुत्तर-वङ्ग-सङ्करजये नौवाट-ह्रीह्रीरव-
 वसोर्हि क्क्षरिभिश्च यन्नचलितं चेन्नास्ति तद्गम्यभूः ।
 किञ्चित्पातुक-केनिपात-पतन-प्रोत्सर्पितैः शीकरै-
 राकाशि स्थिरता कृता यदि भवेत् सान्निष्कलङ्कः शशी ॥ ११
 नौके शस्य कुमारपालद्वपतेर्होर्ध्वार्थितेजस्पतेः
 वै लोकोदरपूरिभूतियशसः प्रज्ञानवाचस्पतेः ।
 सप्तारङ्गचितिपाधिपत्नमभिदः स'चिन्तयन्न यधोः
 प्राणेभ्योऽसिबन्धस्य सचिवः सोऽभूद्गुणियामणोः ॥”

recovered from the shock of these attacks when Rāmapāla of Gauḍa made up his mind to conquer it. It has been recorded before that during his rule one of his Feudatory Chiefs called Māyana conquered the king of Kāmarūpa for the safety of the subjects.²⁶ It seems that immediately after the conquest of the country he had invested Tigmyadeva with the sovereignty of Kāmarūpa. We learn from the Kamauli grant that Kumārāpāla, hearing of the change that had come upon the king Tigmyadeva, who had been honoured by him, made the illustrious Vaidyadeva king in his stead.²⁷ This shows that Vaidyadeva had got the throne of Kāmarūpa through the grace of the king Kumārāpāla. The English rendering of an extract from the Kamauli plate of Vaidyadeva is given below :—

Māyana

Tigmyadeva

Vaidyadeva

‘That Vaidyadeva, who was like to the sun in valour, took upon his head, like a garland, the order of his master and passing a few days in a rapid march defeated that king in battle through the strength of his own arms and became king in his place. When he marched to fight a cloud of dust filled the sky which looked like a sacrificial ground and consequently the journey of the horses of the sun became wearisome.

‘The god Indra shut his eyes with both of his hands and being thus unable to do any other work found fault with the fruits of his own deeds for which his eyes were made winkless. This Vaidyadeva became illustrious by having burnt the heads of the enemies in the sacrificial fire, that was made by the friction of arms and that burst into a flame in the bodies of the

26. Vide 21 foot-note.

27. Vide 22 foot-note.

hostile warriors and by performing the *homa* ceremony, as it were, of the skulls of enemies, and by destroying the kings who were his enemies and by acquiring fame. In that horrible battle-field the heads of the enemies were cut with the sword and thrown into the air. The sun-god took them for the arrays of Rāhu's army and concealed himself having covered up his own rays in the cloud of dust. Just as the ocean is the birth-place of the Moon, the shelter of the mountains that hold up the earth, the abode of all living beings, beautiful at the bottom, full of sparkling water, endowed with a very deep cavity, the receptacle of various kinds of gems, the home of the goddess Lakshmi, the resting place of the god Vishnu, the lord of Lakshmi, so, this Vaidyadeva too, was the spring of joy, the shelter of the Feudatory chiefs who protected the earth, endowed with the quality of *satva*, possessed of the excellence of ministers, full of a number of bright ideas, the master of profound knowledge, the owner of gems, the abode of the goddess Lakshmi and full within of thoughts of the god Vishnu. He might be likened to the ocean had he been a patron of the fools as the ocean is the receptacle of water and had he been defeated by any body as the ocean was crossed by the servant of Rāmachandra. In wisdom he was like Vrihaspati, in energy like the lord of the day in prowess like the lord of the goddess Sri, in patience like the ocean, in wealth like Kuvera and in charity like the king of Champā. These comparisons have been made as they are common in the language. But we must describe him as endowed with all the qualities

Account of
Vaidyadeva

Budhadeva

and say that he alone was like unto himself. He had a younger brother called Budhadeva. Like Rāmachandra's younger brother Lakshmana, he also was known to be the abode of excellence of piety and conduct, for his possessing spotless qualities. Having satisfied the twice-born class by his deeds of charity that give good fruit, that mighty younger brother came to be regarded as the incarnation of *kalpataru* (the desire-fulfilling tree)." 28.

From this plate we learn that Mahārājadhirāja

28. "सज्जमिव शिरसादायाज्ञां प्रभोरुचतेजसः

कतिपयदिनेहृत्वा जिष्णुः प्रयाणनसौ द्रुतं ।

तमवनीपतिं जित्वा युद्धे बभूव सङ्घीपति-

र्त्तिं नजमुजरिबन्दैः साक्षाद्विवस्यतिविक्रमः ॥ १४

एतस्य प्रवरप्रयाणसमये पांशुत्करे स्थण्डिल-

प्रायेव्योमतलेकं-सप्तिकगर्भेर्लब्धोऽङ्घ्रि-यामश्रमः ।

किञ्चाचिद्वय-शोपनेन करयो-रन्वक्रियास्वचलः

मुतामा नयना-निमोलनकरं कर्म स्वकं निन्दति ॥ १५

दोर्दृष्टारणिजि हवि-भुंजि भटन्नातिस्वनैरेधिते

संशमाध्वरपूजिते रिपुशिरः-श्रेणीलसत्-श्रीफलैः ।

कृत्वा होमविधिं पर-क्षितिभुजा दत्वाय पूर्णाहुतिं

लब्धोदययशो-सहस्रफलनसौ शीवेद्यदेवो बभौ ॥ १६

यदुह-समरमध्यात् खड्ग-गघातोत्पन्नः

पर-मुमटशिरोभिर्ध्वान्क्रीणं निरीचा ।

भटिति विसर-राहु-बुद्धौ-विभ्यदकः

स्वरुचमपि रजोभिः प्रोञ्जयन् स्वं जुगोप ॥ १७

चन्द्रस्योद्भवभुसङ्घीप्रशरणं सत्वप्रधानाशयः

पापश्री-महितः स्फुरद्भसमयः सोयं गभीरः परः ।

रत्नानां निलयः प्रियः कुलसृष्टं स्वान्तस्थित-श्रीपतिः

स्यादेव सट्शोऽन्ध धेव्येदि जलाधारोऽयथा ललितः ॥ १८

Paramabhaṭṭāraka the illustrious Vaidya-deva had from his camp of victory at Haṁsākonchi, in the fourth year of his victorious reign, on the eleventh day of the moon in the month of Vaisākha, that being the day of the *Vishuva-samkrānti*, with the object of gaining for himself heaven, given a place called Santipāṭaka together with the village of Mandorā situate in Prāgyotisha-bhūkti, Kāmarupa-maṇḍala and Vārā Vishaya, to a Brāhmaṇa named Śrīdhara who was the foremost of the Srotriyas, and the son of the great *pandit* Yudhishṭhira and the grandson of Bharata and who belonged to the gotra of Kausika and lived in Saragrāma in Varendra.

In this inscription Vaidya-deva has been called 'Paramesvara' 'Paramabhaṭṭāraka' and 'Mahārājadhirāja', it seems that in the fourth year of his rule in Kāmarupa, he had established himself as the independent monarch of the country. His master Kumārapāla of Gauḍa reigned from 1096 to 1117 A. D. Vijayasena of the Sena dynasty had from before been forcibly occupying some of the possessions of the Pāla kings. It seems probable that after the death of Kumārapāla he took possession of the whole of Varendra and advanced for the

ज्ञानं गीयति ह जितैर्हि न पतिः सत्पौरुषैः शोपति-
 र्ज्ञैर्यस्त्वपतिर्नैव न पतिर्हानैः स चत्पापतिः ।
 किञ्चेतेपि गिरीपमान-विषयाः प्रायः प्रसिद्धे ल्वेलाह-
 व्भुसः किन्तु वयं स्वयं स्वसदृशः सर्वैर्गुणानां गये ॥ १८
 यस्य श्रीवृषदेव इत्यनुजभूः श्रीरामभद्रानुज-
 प्रायस्तत्तदसीम-निर्मलगुणैर्धर्मैर्हि शोवर्द्धिभूः ।
 दानैः सत्फल-पञ्चविंशतिज्जल-प्रोति-प्रदानैरपि
 ख्यातः कल्पमहोरह-प्रतिवर्तिर्होव्योव्यवस्यशः ॥ १९ ॥

(Kamauli late of Vaidyadeva)

conquest of Kāmarupa. It is recorded in his Deopārā Inscription that he had forcibly attacked the king of Gauḍa and driven away the king of Kāmarupa.²⁹ It is certain that immediately after the withdrawal of Vijayasena Vaidyadeva was able to recover his kingdom. He might, at this stage, have assumed the titles of 'Paramesvara' 'Paramabhaṭṭāraka' and 'Mahārājādhirāja'.

Accession
of
Vaidyadeva

It has been said above that Vaidyadeva had issued the above grant in the fourth year of his reign, on the eleventh day of the moon of the month of Vaisākha, that being also the day of *Vishuva-sankrānti*. Astronomical calculations show that there was such an auspicious day in 1123 A. D. Thus we may hold that Vaidyadeva had proclaimed himself as an independent king in 1119 A. D. after the death of Kumārapāla. This is also the year of the death of Vijyasena and the coronation of Ballālasena.

From what has been said of Vaidyadeva in the Kamauli grant, it seems that he was not only a great hero, but also a consummate scholar. The place where he had established his capital is still called 'Vaidargarh', which is evidently a corrupted form of 'Vaidyagaḍa'. In this connection the following extract from Sir E. A. Gait's 'Report on the progress of Historical Research in Assam' deserves a notice—

"Near Betna (in Kāmrup) is an embankment forming a square each side of which is about four miles long and known as the Baidargarh."³⁰

29. Deopara Inscription of Vijayasena, Vide Epigraphia Indica, Vol. I. p. 314.

30. Vide Gait's Report on the Progress of Historical Research of Assam, (1897) p. 71.

A rough Chronology of the Kāyastha Kings in

Kāmarupa and Koch Bihar.

Name of Kings.		Place.	Approximate date of their reigns.
	(of Naga dynasty)		A. D.
1.	Kirti-Nāga ...	Kirāta or Garo Hill	750—775
2.	Jayavrisha or Jayanāga	„	775—800
3.	Phani-nāga ...	„	800—825
4.	Darpa-nāga ...	„	825—850
5.	Abhayākara ...	„	850—875
6.	Jayadhara ...	Nāga Hill	875—900
7.	Sridhara (Son of 6) (died in battle)	„	900—910
8.	Harihara (brother of 7)	Kuvach (Koch)	910—930
9.	Heruka ...	Koṭi (Deokoṭa)	930—950
10.	Pasupati-nāga ...	Bānakōṭa	950—970
11.	Ganapati-nāga ...	„	970—995
12.	Saṅkara-nāga ...	„	995—1025
13.	Devadatta-nāga ...	Mahāvana	1020—1045
14.	Siva-nāga ...	„	1045—1072
15.	Karkoṭa and Jaṭadhara	Bānakōṭa	1072—1125

Name of Kings.		Place.	Approximate date of their reigns.
(of Dāsa dynasty)			
1.	Rājyadhara ...	Kuvach (Koch)	930—960
2.	Ārya Sridhara ...	"	960—980
3.	Dharādharma (alias Laksmikara)	"	980—1000
4.	Sulapāni (alias Vaṇsadhara)	"	1000—1020
5.	Pinākapāni ...	"	1020—1040
6.	Taṇkapāni ...	"	1040—1065
7.	Ratnapāni ...	"	1065—1070
(of Ghosha dynasty)			
1.	Dhūrta Ghosha ...	Dhekkari	950—975
2.	Bāla Ghosha ...	"	975—1000
3.	Dhavala Ghosha ...	"	1000—1026
4.	Isvara Ghosha ... (Mahāmāndalika)	"	1026—1062
Occupation of Kāmarupa by Māyana, Feudatory of Rāmapāla			1062—1080
(of Deva dynasty)			
1.	Tigmyadeva ...		1080—1096
2.	Vaidyadeva ...	Kāmarupa	
(as a feudatory of Kumārpāla)			1096—1119
(as an independant King)			1119—1125

The Bhāskara dynasty.

It does not appear that Vaidyadeva was able to reign long as an independent king. Just as with the growth of the power of the Sena kings of Gauḍa, Karṇāṭaka Nānyadeva who belonged to the same stock had conquered Mithilā with the help of the army of Gauḍa, so during the rule of Ballālasena, Rāyārideva, the son of one of his generals took possession of Kāmarūpa. This Rāyārideva is known as Arimatta or Ārimatta in the modern Buranjis of Assam. According to the tradition current in Assam the above-mentioned Baidargarh was the capital established by him. Though it is highly probable that Vaidyadeva was the founder of Baidargarh, yet it is true that he was not destined to possess it long. This seems to be the reason why tradition gives Arimatta the credit of having founded this capital city. The traditions about Arimatta that are now current in Assam are so many and so mixed up with fables that it is impossible to ascertain whether there is any historical truth behind them. The accounts of this king, as gathered from tradition and given in such works as the genealogy of the Rājās of Dimarua, the Bhuiyāñ-charita or the Ādi-charitra, and the Assam Buranji do not agree with one another.³¹ According to tradition, he belonged neither to the old Mlechchha dynasty of Kāmarūpa nor to the Kāyastha dynasty, but was a Kshatriya of the Bhāskara line belonging to lunar race. As he flourished during the palmy

Rāya Arideva
or
Arimatta

31. Sir E. A. Gait's History of Assam, p. 18.

days of the Kāyasthas, some traditions call him the son of a Kāyastha princess.³²

Let us now leave aside both tradition and modern accounts and see what information may be gathered from contemporary inscriptions. A copperplate inscription of Vallabha-deva, the grandson of Rāyārideva has been discovered near Tezpur. It contains the following account ;—

Rāyārideva
of
Bhāskara line

"In the race of the Moon there was that Bhāskara, who on his pair of sandals put a multitude of jewels from king's diadems as straps. From that sun of valour sprang, dear to the earth for the confidence which he inspired, a leader in battle whose banner was (the performance of) the sacrifice—the widowhood of his enemies' wives, a destroyer of lakhs of adversaries, (residing) with whom Fortune, to the end of his life, divested herself of her most patent blemish, that of fickleness. He, king Rāyārideva, the frontal ornament of the kings in Bhāskara's race, it was, who, at the gorgeous festival of battle which was fearful on account of the presence of the lordly elephants of Vaṅga, made the enemy abandon the entire practice of arms on the battle-field ; and who, in his own person, rendered the creation of 'the Lion of the three worlds' exceedingly fruitful."³³

32. Journal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1835, p. 191.

33. "बासीरुमिभूजां मौलिमणिजालवरविका ।

येनोपानदयुगेऽङ्गारि चन्द्रवर्जे स भास्करः ॥ ३

तस्मात् शौचविभावसीव्सुसती-विश्वसजानप्रियो

यज्ञे युद्धपुरन्धरो रिपुवधून् धन्ययज्ञध्वजः ।

यस्मिं शौरपवादमुज्ज्वलतमं लोलैति जीवावधि

विशेषमदिवच्छलचदलनो रायारिदेवो वृषः ॥ ४

From the contents of the above inscription it seems that the father of Rāyārīdeva was not a king. Both the father and the son appear to have risen to fame as generals. From the mention of the 'lordly elephants of Vaṅga' in this inscription, we are led to believe that they had taken with them a large number of elephants and soldiers of the king of Vaṅga. In the terrible battle that followed Bhāskara met his death. Rāyārīdeva also fought in this battle. The tradition that he killed his father unknowingly by means of an arrow seems to have its origin in the fact of his being unable to save his life. From the evidence at hand it seems that Rāyārīdeva defeated either Vaidyadeva or one of his descendants and took possession of Kāmarūpa. He came to the country as the general of Ballālasena and established himself at Baidargarh the capital of Vaidyadeva. Just as Ballālasena is described as a member of the Lunar race in his inscription, so Rāyārīdeva too is said to belong to that race in the copper-plate inscription of Vallabhadeva. Under these circumstances we are led to hold that he was in touch with the Sena Dynasty like Nānyadeva of Karnāta line, the conqueror of Mithilā. Tradition says that Arimatta established his sway all over Assam from east to west and that he had a very long reign. We have seen before that Vaidyadeva issued his grant in 1123 A. D. and it does

वेनापातसमस्तशस्त्रसमयः स'यामभूमौ रिपु-

यक्रो वक्रकरीन्द्रसङ्गविषमि साटोपयुद्धोत्सवे ।

वेनात्यर्थं मयं स्वयं सफलितः वै लोकासि'हो विधिः

सोभूनास्तरव'भराजतिलको रायारिदेवो वृषः ॥" ५

not appear that he was able to reign long. Under these circumstances we may hold that Rāyārideva ruled Assam from about 1125 A. D. to about 1160 A. D. His son was Udayakarna-Nihsaṅka Siṅha. The copper-plate inscription mentioned above gives the following

Udaya-karna description :—

“As the full-moon, rising on the Sumeru which is dear to the gods, delights all the worlds with the collection of her rays, and takes her place on the mountain-peaks, so Udayakarna, springing from king Rāyārideva, who pleased the learned, delighted all people with heaps of wealth and took his place over the heads of princes. In the reign of king Nihsaṅka Siṅha (other) kings entirely ceased to uplift their valorous arms; but for this, how would their wives and other wealth continue even in mountain caves? King Nihsaṅka had a queen, dear to him as his life, who bore the name of Ahiavadevi. A swan in that Mānasa lake which was the heart of king Nihsaṅka-siṅha, for every kind of amorous dalliance what the moon in loveliness is to the water-lily, glorious as the lotus in that lake which is the quintessence of mundane existence, she stood manifested as the onedwelling place of exquisite beauty. Having received an unprecedented favour from the Lord of Gauri who was pleased with might of their great austerities, they obtained as a son the Favourite of Fortune Vallabhadava, who by all the valiant sons of kings as if they were Garuḍas, is sung of as Nārāyana and who by his heroism sportively overcomes hostile princes, as if they were courtizans. The groups of the gods, having come to witness the might

lla hadava

of his arrow which, able to pierce whatever is hard (to pierce) in a chase, entered up to the butt into a row of buffaloes, all followed him, joyfully shouting 'Be victorious, Vallabha !' Only one of them, Yama, turned back to preserve his own buffalo. Vallabhadeva alone knows how to wield the sword, is the chief of those skilled in the use of the dagger, is sole and supreme in the science of archery and is a rider of teams of Kāmboja horses as well as of lordly elephants."³⁴

According to the modern Burañjī and tradition Ratnasīṃha was the son of Arimatta. Kamtesvara was in possession of Vaidyagada for some time. Ratnasīṃha had to strain every nerve to defeat him and to recover his father's

34. "उदयसुदयः पूर्णचन्द्रः सुमीरौ विबुध-सनभिरामे रात्रि रात्रादिदेवे
 वारविभवकलापेनन्दयन् सर्वलोकां दधदद्विहपदमाय आश्रतां मत्तदीशु ।
 निःशङ्कसि'हन् पतिरिह वारपत्ये भूमीभुजः स्वभुजवोध्यसमुत्पन्नानि ।
 सन्त्यजुद्यदि न वा गिरिकन्दरेपि तिष्ठन्ति दारविमवाः कथमन्यथा वा ॥ ७
 राज्ञो निःशङ्कसि'हस्य महिषो प्राणसंशिता ।
 नानाहिमवदेवति सासीद यस्यां प्रतिष्ठितं ॥ ८
 निःशङ्कसि'हन् पमानसराजहंसो शङ्कारकेलिकुलकौरवचन्द्रकान्तिः ।
 स'सारसारसरसी-सरसीदृष्टयोरामिव भूव सुषमैकनिवासभूमिः ॥ ९
 ताम्राः सुहृ-तपःप्रभावमुदिताय संलभ्य गौरौपते
 यैः सर्वे हृ पवीरपुत्रशङ्क नारायणी गीयते ।
 लब्धः पुत्रतया प्रसादमनुलं श्रीवल्लभा वल्लभ-
 देवो वै विष्णुमारवारवज्रित-विक्रान्तलोलापतिः ॥ १०
 यस्याखेटकठोरपाटनपटोराटीपमालोकितुं
 आमूलानाहिषावलौ प्रविशतः शङ्कस्य देवव्रजाः ।
 आयाता जयवज्रमेतुगुणयुः सर्वे वचोभिर्मुदा
 तवेको विमुखः स्वकासरपरित्राणाय यातो यमः ॥ ११
 खड्गशायुषधः कुरिकारमुख्यो धातुशक्तिव्याप्रशक्तैकरिखः ।
 क्षात्र्योजवाजिप्रजवाहनेन्द-यन्तामवहन्नभदेव एव ॥"

(Vide Epigraphia Indica, Vol. V. p. 184 and 187.)

Jongāl
Balahu
a nickname
of
Jal abhade

throne. It is not very easy to say whether Ratnasiñha was identical with Nihsañkasiñha or not. According to the Burañji "Ratnasiñha afterwards lost his kingdom owing to the curse of a Brāhmana, with whose wife he had carried on an intrigue. In the Sahari mauza in Nowgong are the remains of an old fort with high embankments known as the Jo ñālgarh. This is alleged to have been the capital of Jongāl Balahu another son of Arimatta, who was defeated by the Kachāris and drowned himself in the Kallañg river."³⁵

Here Sir E. A. Gait says that king Arimatta had a son called Balahu. He seems to be Vallabhadeva of the copper-plate-inscription who issued the grant in question in the year 1107 of the Saka era (1185 A. D.). This plate gives the following account of the grant made by Vallabhadeva :—

"In the proximity of the (temple of) Mahādeva situated in the Hāpychā-maṇḍala, to the east of Kirtipur, Vallabhadeva, the son of Nihsañkasiñha, at the command of his father, gave an alms-house for the hungry, in order that his mother might obtain heaven everlasting. For the support of this widely famous alms-house the long-armed illustrious Vallabhadeva, who was thrown off the quality of darkness, (in the Saka year 1107) granted, with their woods and thickets, with the people in them, with their water and land, and settled within their four boundaries, seven villages, the names of which are written here."³⁶

35. Gait's History of Assam, p. 19.

36. Epigraphia Indica, Vol. V. p. 187.

From the above account of the copper-plate-grant it is evident that though Vallabhadeva was called the king in the year 1107 of the Saka Era (1185 A. D.) yet his father was then living and that it was at his behest that he had made the grant in question with the intention of securing heaven for his mother. Now the question arises as to why he assumed the title of a king during the lifetime of his father. It seems that though Rāyārideva had been sent by the king of Bengal for the conquest of Kāmarūpa yet he might have proclaimed himself independent ruler of the country after it had been conquered by him. It may be that this fact had not been brought to the notice of Ballālasena for some time. His attention was directed to the affairs in Kāmarūpa after he had assumed the title of Mahārājādhirāja after the conquest of the whole of Gauḍa and Magadha (1159-60 A. D.) Rāyārideva was dead by this time. His son Niḥsaṅka-siṅha was reigning as King of Kāmarūpa. The king of Gauḍa had to fight long against the king Niḥ-saṅka-siṅha. At length Lakshmanasena, son of Ballālasena, inflicted a crushing defeat on the enemy and conquered Kāmarūpa. It is stated in the Mādhāinagara copper-plate of Lakshmanasena that he had conquered the country of Kāmarūpa by dint of his own valour. After this defeat of Niḥsaṅka-siṅha, his son Ballabhadeva paid homage to Lakshmanasena and was installed on the throne of his father. It is not known how long he ruled Kāmarūpa.

Muhammad-i-Bakhtyar seems to have invaded Kāmarūpa during the reign of Vallabhadeva or of his son and successor. The following extracts

are taken from the contemporary account given by Minhāj :—

Bakhtyār's
conquest.

“After some years had passed away, and he had ascertained the state of the different mountain tracts of Turkistān and Tibbat to the eastward of Lakhanāwatī, the ambition of seizing the country of Turkistān and Tibbat began to torment his brain; and he had an army got ready, and about 10,000 horse were organized. In the different parts of those mountains which lie between Tibbat and the country of Lakhanāwatī are three races of people, one called the Kūnch, the second the Mej, and the third the Tihāru, and all have Turk countenances. They have a different idiom too, between the language of Hind and Turk. One of the chiefs of the tribes of Kūnch and Mej, whom they were wont to call ‘Ali, the Mej fell into the hands of Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār, ~~the~~ Khālī, and, at his hand also, the former adopted the Muhammadan faith. He agreed to conduct Mahammad-i-Bakht-yār into those hills, and act as guide; and he brought the latter to a place where there is a city, the name of which is Bardhankot. They relate, after this manner, that, in ancient times, Shāh Gūshtāsib returned from the country of Chīn, and came towards Kāmṛūd, and, by that route, got into Hindūstān, and founded that city (Bardhan-kot).... A river flows in front of that place, of vast magnitude, the name of which is Beg-matī; and, when it enters the country of Hindūstān, they style it, in the Hindu dialect, Samund (Ocean); and, in magnitude, breadth and depth, it is three times more than the river Gang.”

“To the banks of this river Muhammad-i-

Bakht-yār came; and 'Alī, the Mej, joined the army of Islām ; and for a period of ten days, he took the army up the river among the mountains, until he brought it to a place where, from remote times, they had built a bridge of hewn stone, consisting of upwards of twenty arches. After the army of Islam passed over that bridge, he (Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār) installed there, at the head of the bridge, two of his own Amīrs, one a Turk slave, and the other a Khalj, with troops, in order to guard it until his return. Then Muhammad-i-Bakht yār, with the whole of the rest of his forces, passed over that bridge ; and, when the Rāe of Kāmruḍ became aware of the passage [over the bridge] by the conquering troops, he despatched trustworthy persons [saying]:—"It is not proper, at this time, to march into the country of Tibbat, and it is necessary to return, and to make ample preparations, when, in the coming year, I, who am the Rāe of Kāmruḍ, agree that I will embody my own forces and will precede the Muhammadan troops, and will cause that territory to be acquired." Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār did not, in any way, accept this counsel, and he turned his face towards the Mountains of Tibbat.

* * * after passing that river, for a period of fifteen days, the troops wended their way, stages and journeys, through defiles and passes ascending and descending among lofty mountains. On the sixteenth day the open country of Tibbat was reached. The whole of that tract was under cultivation, garnished with tribes of people and populous villages. They reached a place where there was a fort of great strength and the Musalmān army commenced plundering

* * * The route the country around. by which they come is the Mahamhā-i [or Mahanmhā-i] Darah [Pass] and this road in that country is well known; for example, from the territory of Kāmruḍ to that of Tirhut are thirty-five mountain passes, by which they bring the *tangahan* horses into the territory of Lakhanawati.

"In short when Muhammad-i-Bakhtyār found out the nature of that tract the Musalmān troops being fatigued and knocked up by the march, and a large number having been martyred and disabled on the first day he held consultation with his Amirs. They come to the conclusion that it was necessary to retreat, in order that, next year, after making ample arrangements, they might return again into that country. When they retreated through out the whole route, not a blade of grass—not a stick of fire-wood remained, as they (the inhabitants) had set fire to the whole of it, and burnt it; and all the inhabitants of those defiles and passes had moved off from the line of route. During these fifteen days not a pound of food nor a blade of grass did the cattle and horses obtain; and all (the men) were killing their horses and eating them, until they issued from the mountains into the country of Kāmruḍ and reached the head of that bridge. They found two arches of the bridge destroyed, on this account, that enmity had arisen between both those Amirs [left to guard it], and, in their discord they had neglected to secure the bridge and protect the road, and had gone off, and the Hindus of the Kāmruḍ country had come and destroyed the bridge.

"On the arrival at that place of Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār with his forces he found no way of crossing, and boats were not procurable. He was lost in surprise and bewilderment. They agreed that it was necessary to halt in some place, and contrive [about constructing] boats and floats, in order that they might be enabled to pass over the river. They pointed out an idol temple in the vicinity of that place [where they then were] of exceeding height, strength, and sublimity, and very handsome, and in it numerous idols both of gold and silver were deposited, and one great idol so (large) that its weight was by conjecture upwards of two or three thousand *mans* of beaten gold. Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār and the remainder of his followers sought shelter within that idol-temple, and began to devise means for obtaining wood and rope for the construction of rafts and crossing the river, in such wise that the Rāe of of Kāmraḍ became aware of the reverses and helplessness of the Musalmān army. He issued command to the whole of the Hindus of the country, so that they came pouring in in crowds and round about the idol-temple were planting spiked bāamboos in the ground, and were weaving them together, so that it (their work) was appearing like unto walls.

"When the Musalmān troops beheld that state of affairs, they represented to Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār, [saying]:—"If we remain like this, we shall all have fallen into the trap of these infidels; it behoveth to adopt some means whereby to effect extrication." With one accord they made a rush, and all at once issued from the idol-temple, attacked one point [in the stockade],

and made a way for themselves, and reached the open plain, and the Hindus after them. When they reached the river bank the Musalmāns halted, and each one, to the best of his ability, sought means of crossing over. Suddenly some few of the soldiers urged their horses into the rivers and, for the distance of about an arrow flight, the water was fordable. A cry arose in the force that they had found a ford, and the whole threw themselves into the water, and the Hindus following them occupied the river's bank. When the Musalmāns reached mid-stream, [where] was deep water, they all perished, [with the exception of] Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār, who with a few horse-men a hundred more or less, succeeded, by great artifice, in effecting the passage of the river; and all the rest were drowned. After Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār emerged from the water, information reached a body of the Kunch and Mej. The guide, 'Alī, the Mej had kinsmen at the passage, and they came forward to receive him (Muhammad-i-Bakht-yār), and rendered him great succour until he reached Diw-kot."³⁷

When Bakhtyār invaded Kāmarupa about 1203 A. D. the ruling chief of the country, was known as Kāmesvara.³⁸ He might be Vallabha-deva or his successor. We can get a glimpse in to the wealth and prosperity of the kingdom in those days from the writings of a contemporary Muhammadan historian :—

"Idol temple in the vicinity of that place of exceeding height, strength and sublimity, and

37. Raverty's *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, p. 566-572.

38. Gait's *History of Assam*, p. 34.

very handsome, and in it numerous idols both of gold and silver were deposited and *one great idol so (large) that its weight was by conjecture upwards of two or three thousand mans of beaten gold.*"

The great
idol of gold.

But no trace of this grand temple and this gigantic image of gold is to be found now.

It has been shewn before by quotations from the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* that in early days there existed in Kāmarūpa houses made of gold. Many people may be inclined to regard these accounts nothing but imaginary descriptions. But they will not seem to be so if one takes the trouble of going through the writings of the contemporary Muhammadan writer. At the time of Muhammad-i-Bakhtyār's invasion the power of the kings of Kāmarūpa had been greatly reduced. The Mlechchhas who had ruled Kāmarūpa for about four thousand years were now deprived of the sovereignty of the country. The Kāyasthas of Gauḍa who had established their supremacy there, were greatly weakened by repeated foreign invasions and were at last driven from the throne. The invasions of Rāmapāla, Kumārapāla, Vijayasena, Ballālasena and Lakshmanasena had rendered the country very weak.

Taking advantage of this, the non-aryans living on the eastern and south-eastern frontiers of the country were gradually raising their hands. It does not seem that the kings of the Bhāskara dynasty were powerful enough to cope with them.

Rise of Ādi-Bhūiyās.

According to later Buranji and biographical works of the time, the Kshatriya rule in Kāmārūpa came to end after the death of Ratnasīṅha of Arimatta's line, which event took place in the year 1160 of the Saka Era or 1238 A.D.³⁹ Then followed a period of anarchy. This is a dark period in the history of the country. The accounts given in the modern Buranjis and biographical works are based on mere traditions and as such they are not very reliable. From a perusal of these works it seems that the petty Zaminders living in the various parts of the country had asserted their independence and called themselves Ādi-Bhūiyās. An account of the origin of the Ādi-bhūiyās has been given in a book called the 'Bhūiyār Puthi' :—

“Māyamatta divided his kingdom between his two sons, giving to Arimatta the western portion, where his Minister Samudra built a city named Viçvanāth, and to Nāgmatta the eastern portion, with the old capital Ratnapura. Nāgmatta died two years later, and Māyamatta then had to rule again. Subsequently, when out hunting, he was accidentally shot in the head by Arimatta, who had discharged his arrow at a deer. Arimatta tried to do penance, but the Brāhmins would not take his gold. He then placed his Minister, Samudra, in charge of his kingdom, with Manohara, the son of the latter, at Viçvanātha

39. Vide Rājavamsāvali Ms of Assam Govt-collection, (Gauhāti No. 19)

Samudra died, and Manohara became the sole ruler at Viçvanātha. The latter, dying in his turn, left as his only child a daughter Laksmī, who worshipped Durgā, by whom she was taught a love charm. With the aid of this charm she gained the love of the Sun God, by whom she had two sons, Çāntanu and Sāmanta, who were presented by their divine father with a sacred book engraved on copper, the prayers in which had such power that their recitation would bring down the sacrificial fire and confer on the devotee any gift which he might ask for. Çāntanu had twelve sons, Lahkar, Kabyāsi, Padma, Rāy, Salāl, Hokā, Tetan, Dhoya, Uzir, Sāral, Rāmāi, and Tomāi, who were known as the Bāro Bhūiyāns. Sāmanta also had twelve sons—Kanaubbar, Raghu, Mukunda, Kadamba, Surath, Sundar, Susama, Gaura, Ratna, Mahāratha, Lep and Kep. All lived together until Laksmī died at the age of 85. Çāntanu then took to worshipping Devī which Sāmanta did not like and so the two families separated, Cāntanu going to Rāmpur in Nowgong, while Sāmanta remained in Lakshmīpura.⁴⁰ After Sāntanu's death, his twelve sons exercised supreme power. The Chutiya king of Vidarbha attacked them, but was defeated, and a similar fate befell the Kachārī king of Kāmarupa. They then became proud and vain-glorious, and so the goddess (Devī) deserted them and betook herself to Saumāra, to whose king she revealed herself in a dream, and said that if he attacked the

Adi-Bhūiyās

40. It is said that Lakshmi gave her name to Lakshmīpur which was previously called Bangagrām.

Bhuiyāns outside their own kingdom *i.e.*, south of the Lohita, he would defeat them. The son of Indra acted on this suggestion and defeated the Bhuiyāns and took them captives. As they refused to swear allegiance to him, he ordered them to be sacrificed before the shrine of Çyāmā Kālī at Sadiya. Kālī, however, interceded, and the Bhuiyāns were released after taking the required oath of fealty. They soon distinguished themselves when fighting on behalf of the Saumāra king, by killing the Kachāri king of Kāmarupa and annexing his kingdom, and also by slaying Dhira Nārāyana, the Chutiya king, after a battle lasting seven days. Carguyā became the capital of the enlarged kingdom."⁴¹

From the account given above it seems that when the king of the Bhāskara dynasty died without issue about 1238 A. D., his Kāyastha minister Samudra and his son Manohara drove away all the officials of the State and themselves monopolised all the power. They had appointed their own men to all high posts in the State. At last the Minister's son Manohara became king at a place called Bisvanāth. In order to make his position safe he gave in marriage his only daughter Lakshmi to a prince of the Bhāskara dynasty who is represented as Sun God. This lady bore a number of sons all of whom rose to eminence. In the modern 'Bhuiyā-charita' Samudra and Manohara have been described as Sūdras. But this is far from the truth. In the Ādi-charitra we find an account of the sacraments of Sāntanu

41. Gait's Progress Report of Historical Research in Assam, pp. 20-21.

and Sumantra the sons of Lakshmī. It is said that after performing their *Samskāra* (a regenerating ceremony) they wore the sacred thread and were known as Kāyasthas.⁴² Though the power of the Kāyasthas was almost at an end in Kāmarupa during the ascendancy of the Bhāskara dynasty, yet there is not the slightest doubt about it that it was re-established by Manohara and his daughter's sons as well as by their descendants. Strictly speaking it is they who were known as the *Adi-Bhūiyās* of Assam.

Some of their descendants in later times in order to dignify their families asserted that they had a family connection with the great Vaishnava reformer Saṅkaradeva. Accordingly the author of *Adi-charitra* represented Kaunajavara the eldest son of Sāmanta as the father of Chandivara the great-grand father of Sankaradeva. But really Chandivara was the son of Landādeva, and not Landādeva but Chandivara himself had migrated to Assam from Gauḍa. He had no connexion whatever with the family of the *Adi-Bhūiyās*. The books written by Saṅkaradeva himself conclusively proves this. The *Adi-Bhūiyās* were originally worshippers of the goddess Sakti. One branch of them subsequently was converted into Vaishnavism and thus separated itself from the others. According to the *Ādi-charitra*, the family of Sāntanu settled at Lakshmīpur (now Lakhimpur) on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra and that of Sumantra

42. "বশকর্ষ করি যজ্ঞহুত পলে দিলা। দেবর তনয় দেখি কানহ বুলিলা।"

(আদিচরিত্র ৭৮ পঙ্ক)

at Rāmapur (now Rangpur in Sibsagar District) on the southern bank of the same river. When the twelve brothers were reigning at Lakshmipur the king of Chhutia came to them and asked them to make him their king. But they scornfully refused the proposal. Thereupon the king of Chhutia declared war against them. But his enemies fought very heroically against him and inflicted a defeat upon him. Next the king of Kachāri wanted to be their king. But as the Bhūiyās did not agree to the proposal, he marched against them with a large army. This time also the Bhūiyās acquitted themselves creditably and drove away the invader. In this way the Bhūiyās ruled the place for about seventy years. At this stage Chaturaṅga (Sukhāṅghā) of the Ahom dynasty defeated the Bhūiyās at a place called Chargoa and took possession of Lakshmipur. At first the Bhūiyās were quite unwilling to acknowledge the suzerainty of their enemy. But, when they were taken before the goddess Kālī at Sadiyā for sacrifice, they agreed to pay homage to their conqueror and thus saved their lives. Subsequently they helped the Ahom king to defeat the kings of Chhutia and Kachāri and became very favourite to him. Their descendants served under the Ahom kings and lived at Lakhimpur and Sādia and the neighbouring places.⁴³ The descendants of the Adi-Bhūiyās are now to be found in many places in Upper Assam. But all their influence passed away on account of the decrease of the power of the Ahoms and owing to the oppression committed upon them by the Māns.

43. Vide *Adi-charitra*, 59-185 Pada.

It has been already related that Mahammad-i-Bakhtiyār invaded Kāmarupa in about 1203 A.D. After him Ghiyāsuddin (also a Governor of Bengal) invaded the country in 1227 A. D. According to the *Tabakat-i Nāsiri*, Ghiyāsuddin conquered Assam as far as Sadiya, but the seizure of his own capital by Nāsiruddin, eldest son of the Emperor Altamash is the cause of his hasty return from Assam. The next invader was Tughril Khan who invaded Kāmarupa in about 1278 A. D. These repeated invasions had greatly weakened the ruling power and left the people destitute. The result was that the country was in a state of turmoil.

About the time when the Bhūiyās were reigning in Lakshmīpur, the Dāsa dynasty of the Sāṇḍilya *gotra* was gradually raising its head near Baidargarh in the modern district of Kāmarupa. We get the following information from the Rāutkuci grant of Purusottamadāsa which was given in the year 1251 of the Saka Era (1329 A. D.) :—

“In the Sāṇḍilya *gotra* there was born Vāsudeva who resembled the preceptor of the gods, who was devoted to the Brāhmanas, was the ocean of all good qualities and the foremost of the noble Sūdras. A thousand swordsmen always marched before him and he was the right hand of the king and his enemies had their residence in heaven. The famous Jayadevadāsa who was the lotus of his own race and who possessed the characteristic qualities of the Aryas and was adorned with many noble qualities, derived his being from him. What am I to say about the wealth of his virtue ? From him was born the illustrious Purusottama who on account of

Purusottama
dāsa, king
of Central
Kāmarūpa.

his great weath was matchless and was like the Kalpa tree on earth. By dint of the valour of his arms and heroism he had defeated the rival kings and obtained the glory of Sovereignty. How am I to sing his glory? He was the path of sound intelligence and the boat of valour; he was like a boat in the sea of obstruction and the gem decorating the neck of the goddess Lakshmi and the gem Syaman-taka; to the host of suitors, he was the gem that yields every desired object.”⁴⁴

It is clear from this grant that Vāsudeva was not himself a king. He was ‘the right hand of the king’ and a leader of one thousand swordsmen. His grandson Purusottama became king by dint of his own valour. In the year 1251 of the Saka Era (1329 A. D.) he had by this grant made over the village of Rāut-konchi to a virtuous Brāhmaṇa of the name of Dharmakara the son of Nilāmbara, the grandson of Purusottama and belonging to the Sāvarni

- 44, “प्राक्शाखिल्यगीते भवदनरगुरुज्ञासुराश्च कवितः
नाम्नो यो वासुदेवोः सकलगुणमरित्वानिसत्पुद्गस्तुष्टः ।
नित्य सदगच्छतोऽये नुचलति सहसा खड्गसाहयमेवं
भूपालस्यापसव्यः कर इव जयवे स्वर्गसंस्थानशतः ॥
जज्ञे यो जयदेवदास इति सः खातः ततः सदगुणैः
तस्यायपतिरिच्यते निजकुलाधीजार्थमैश्वर्यवान् ।
वाच्यं तस्य किमस्य पुण्यविभवो यद्भूतिमारादभूत्
तस्यात् श्रीपुरुषोत्तमो निरुपमः आलोककल्पद्रुमः ॥
वीर्योपाज्जितयौथ्यनिर्जितमुनात् प्रथमिं प्रथिभुजः
यस्याथे चलतोऽनुसान्ति महिमा तस्योपवर्णः किमु ।
सत्सन्धित्तरणिः प्रतापतरणिः शोकच्छम्भामणिः
वाषाञ्जेलरणिः स्थलतकमणिः याचजासु चिन्तामणिः ॥”

Copperplate grant of Purusathamadāsa, Vide Assam
Bāndhava, 1322, Bhādra.

gotra. It seems that he was not a great King but only a petty land-lord like the twelve Bhūiyās described before. The village of Rāut-kāuñchi is now known as Rātkuchi and it is situated in the district of Kāmarupa in the neighbourhood of Nalabāri. It is six miles to the south of Baidargarh the capital of Baidyadeva. Under these circumstances it seems probable that Purusottama had established himself at the old capital of Baidargarh. His grand-father has been described as 'the foremost of the noble Sudras' and as belonging to the Sāṇḍilya gotra. According to the Assam Buranji and tradition, the Kamatā dynasty flourished in the fourteenth century of the Christian Era. Sir Gait has described them as the Khens. He gives the following account of them :—

"To what race the Khens belonged it is impossible to say. The great majority of them have now been absorbed in the ranks of other communities. The few who still retain the tribal name claim to be Kāyasthas and are said to betray in their physiognomy a considerable infusion of Aryan blood, but this was probably received after their rise to power and affords no clue to their origin."⁴⁵

The manner in which the description of the family has been given in the above grant seems to support the view of Sir Gait. The author of the inscription has described Vāsudeva in the third sloka as 'devoted to the Brāhmanas' and the 'foremost of the noble Sūdras.' But in the fourth sloka he has been described as possessing 'the characteristic qualities of the Āryas.'

45. Gait's History of Assam, p. 41.

We are of opinion that in those days there was a custom in Kāmarūpa among the Kāyasthas of marrying according to the Gāndharva form of marriage girls belonging to other castes.⁴⁶ The issue of such marriage were known as 'noble Sūdras' in the society. According to Manu and other Smṛiti writers the ceremony of *Pānigrahana* or 'taking the hand' could take place only when the marriage was in the same caste.⁴⁷ There was no use of *mantras* in a marriage outside the caste and there was no ceremony of 'taking the hand.' The offspring of such a marriage would not be recognised by his father's kinsmen as belonging to their own caste. This seems to have happened to the Khens. The well-to-do of this tribe hold that the word 'Sena' has become 'Khen' for the peculiar pronunciation of the locality. But it is not known whether they had any connection with the Sena family or not.

We are inclined to believe that Vāsudeva was born from the the connections with a descendant of Ādi-Bhūiyās and a Sudra girl by Gandharva marriage. He acquired name and fame through his high connection. Purusottamadāsa of the copperplate-grant was a scion of his family. But it is not known whether he had any connection with the Khen dynasty or not. This Purusottamadāsa seems to be 'Purusottama Gajapati' a name that occurs in the book called *Dipikāchchhanda*.

END OF THE VOL. I.

46. Such Gandharva marriages were common even in the 19th century. Vide letter dated the 14th June 1830 from the Davidson, Offy Commissioner to D. Scott Esq, Commissioner of Revenue of the N. E. parts of Rangpur.

47. "पाणिग्रहणं स्त्रियः सवर्णमुपदिशति ।" (मनु)

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